Ruins of Ani Puts History in Perspective

BELMONT, Mass. — Prof. Peter Balakian and Aram Arkan, in their latest collaboration, the translation of a manuscript by Bishop Krikor Balakian, The Ruins of Ani: A journey to Armenia’s Medieval Capital and Its Legacy, are using Armenians’ sentimental attachment to the ancient capital to shine a light on why indeed the city deserves to be viewed with awe and reverence.

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Studies and Research to a packed audience.

Peter Balakian (Photos by Israe Hovsepian)

Azeri Incursion Attempt Reported

YEREVAN (RFE/RL, Armenpress) — The Armenian military claimed to have thwarted early on Friday, March 6, an Azerbaijani commando raid on one of its positions along the border with Azerbaijan.

The government reported attacks almost every day: One soldier, Zohrab Sianosyan, 36, was killed by Azerbaijani fire on March 10 in the southwestern section of the border.

According to the Defense Ministry, an Azerbaijani “sabotage” unit attached the outpost on March 6, but was repelled by Armenian soldiers deployed there, “suffering losses” as a result.

The ministry published photographs of a German-manufactured mine detector and combat ammunition which it said were left by the enemy at the scene.

“One soldier was lightly wounded as a result of the actions,” the ministry added in a statement on the pre-dawn incident which it said occurred in Armenia’s northern Tavush region bordering the Gagazli district in western Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan’s State Border Guard Service, which operates from the section of the border, denied the attempted incursion. It said that Armenian troops opened “intensive” fire on some of its positions from heavy machine-guns and sniper rifles early in the morning.

“The Azerbaijani provocations are continuing,” the ministry spokesman, Arsen Hovannisyan, said on Friday.

Tensions at the Tavush-Gazakh border have been on the rise in recent weeks despite an overall decrease in truce violations in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict observed since October 2018.

“During the same period our soldiers have been wounded as a result of enemy actions,” Hovannisyan said. “It is only natural that we retaliated adequately for our wounded soldiers, which may have had [fatal] consequences.”

In addition, Public Radio of Armenia report on March 9 that Azerbaijan forces have been firing in the direction of Tavush Province.

“There has been shooting in the direction of Voskepar this morning, but the village has not been directly targeted,” head of Voskepar community Serob Shakhoyan told Public Radio of Armenia.

Firing in the direction of the village started at about 7 pm on March 8. Several houses and a vehicle were damaged.

(Alex editorial on Page 18.)

Tekeyan of US and Canada Renovates Berdzor Classroom

Berdzor, Artsakh – The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) has undertaken the renovation of the Tevkon School in Berdzor, Artsakh, in parallel to the TCA Sponsor a Teacher Program, which supports this school and four others in Armenia. This renovation program shows that individuals really can make a difference for life in Artsakh and Armenia.

Berdzor is strategically located on the Kashatagh (Lachin) passageway between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The old classrooms (Lachi) classroom, which links Armenia to Artsakh, was in poor condition due to the exigencies of the Artsakh War. The old classrooms that children had to use had mold and broken floors, walls often ready to collapse, and see TCA, page 3.

President Signs Bill Banning Smoking

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President Armen Sarkissian on March 6 signed into law a smoking ban bill. The law bans smoking in indoor public spaces, including in all restaurants.

“The law really has greater impact than the calls and advice we hear from parents, friends, the stories about health hazards from smoking we read nearly every day.”

“It’s never late to quit, and this shouldn’t require the need of any governmental body. I don’t think that an area which first of all requires sober thinking needs a legislative regulation. Certainly, the law draws some boundaries which should be adhered to,” Sarkissian said.

Armenia’s State Symphony Rises

NEW YORK (RFE/RL) — Nagorno-Karabakh remains a “paralyzily” territory with a more democratic and pluralistic political system than in Azerbaijan, Freedom House said in an annual survey released on Wednesday, March 4.

The Armenia rights group also said that the 2018 “Vehet Revolution” in Armenia has contributed to greater respect for “political rights” and “civil liberties” in Karabakh.

“The political opening in Armenia that began with [Nikol] Pashinyan’s long-shot rise to the premiership in 2018 has had a positive effect on the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh during 2019,” reads the latest “Freedom in the World” survey of more than 200 countries and territories rated on a 1 to 7 scale.

There was an increase in civil and society activity surrounding local elections in September, and the stage was set for further changes in the March 2020 elections for Nagorno-Karabakh’s president and parliament,” it says.

As a result, Freedom House gave 34 points to Karabakh, up from 31 in 2019. Armenia received 53 points. It is one of the three “paralyzily” free ex-Soviet states showing “some positive signs” in the past year. The other two are Ukraine and Moldova.

By contrast, Azerbaijan was again rated “not free,” with Freedom House lowering its score from 11 to 10.

“Power in Azerbaijan’s authoritarian regime remains heavily concentrated in the hands of Ilham Aliyev, who has served as president since 2003, and his extended family,” says the report.

“Corruption is rampant, and the formal political opposition has been weakened by years of persecution. The authorities have carried out an extensive crackdown on civil liberties in recent years, leaving little room for independent expression or activism.”

Life in Armenia Seems Back to Normal

As Government Advocates End to Travel Curbs on People and Places

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Armenian citizens who are currently in Italy have been urged to “urgently suspend their trips and return to Armenia” because of the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) in this part of Europe.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, March 10, Armenia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs also urged Armenian citizens to strictly adhere to the terms of their travel as far as possible, and to return to Armenia if they are currently in Italy.

 Authorities in Yemen also called upon citizens who are currently in Italy to remain in constant contact with Armenia’s embassy in Rome.

Later on Tuesday, the Irish budget airline Ryanair, which entered Armenia’s civil aviation market earlier this year, announced suspension of all flights from Yerevan to Italy and back until April 8.

The whole of Italy, a country of some 60 million people, has been placed under quarantine, as the Italian authorities have stepped up efforts to tackle the coronavirus outbreak that has affected more than 5 million people and left 603 dead in the country.

Earlier, authorities in Armenia also urged citizens to temporarily avoid visiting Iran, China, South Korea, Japan and EU countries over coronavirus risks, except in urgent cases.

In addition, government announced that it is cancelling an Armenian delegation’s scheduled participation at the AI & Big data EXPO in London on March 13.

Armenia reported its first and as yet only coronavirus case on March 1. A 29-year-old man was sent to the hospital in a critical condition. On Friday the country reported its second case.

By no means are these cases linked, the health ministry told the public.
**Archaeologists Have Discovered Children’s Skeletons at Artanish Excavation Site**

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Human remains were unearthed in June 2019 at Aranish archaeological site and are the largest site of the Armenian “Service for the protection of historical environment and cultural museum-reserves” organization, the group reported.

The excavations were conducted jointly with RA NAS Archaeology and Ethnography Institutes.

The group excavated two burial chambers, one of which was a mass burial site. Anthropologist Hasmik Simonyan, a member of the excavation group, said that the mass grave site was of particular significance where around 30 human skeletons were discovered.

Anthropological remains dating back to 7-6 BC contain also children’s skeletons. In Simonyan’s words, 14 skulls were recovered, three of which belonged to children.

The excavation group plans to resume work in Armenia this year.

**New Citizen of Armenia Is 105**

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on March 6 handed an Armenian passport to Nourhan Josephovich, the 105-year-old Italian citizen of Armenian descent who had applied for Armenian citizenship.

“I was greatly honored to grant the Republic of Armenia passport to our 105-year old compatriot Nourhan Josephovich (who was born in 1915 in Istanbul),” Pashinyan said on social media. “It was even more touching to learn that Nourhan Josephovich had made the decision to return to Armenia for permanent residency by being inspired with the non-violent, loving, people’s revolution,” he added, posting a photo of Josephovich kissing the new passport.

**China Donates Coronavirus Tests**

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – China will donate 1,000 test kits for diagnosing the novel coronavirus to Armenia, Chinese Ambassador to Armenia Tian Erlong told Healthcare Minister Arsen Torosyan during his recent visit to the capital.

The Embassy of China has also provided some funds for Armenia to acquire additional medical items.

Speaking about the outbreak in China, the ambassador said the situation is improving.

Torosyan spoke about the quarantined direct contacts of the one patient in Armenia infected with coronavirus, noting that all 31 citizens quarantined with him are feeling well and they continue testing negative for the disease.

**Former President Kocharyan Hospitalized**

YEREVAN (RFERL) – Jailed former President Robert Kocharyan was hospitalized late on Sunday, according to his lawyer, Hovanes Khudoyan said on Monday, March 9, that doctors at Erebuni medical center had assigned inpatient treatment to his client.

“Kocharyan will undergo some medical examination today, which Torosyan replied: “Our boys have always been examined for a long time now as suspected to corruption or other criminal offenses. The latter will have to prove the legality of their holdings if they are to retain them. During a parliament debate on Wednesday, March 4, Justice Minister Rustam Badayan insisted that corruption suspects, notably current and former state officials, are the main targets of the bill portrayed by the government as a major anti-corruption measure. The authorities will also use it against crime figures and carriers of ‘criminal subculture,’ he said.

“Nobody beyond this circle can fall under the jurisdiction of this law except in cases where assets were artificially registered in a particular person’s name,” Basayan told lawmakers.

The minister thus sought to allay fears that may concern Armenian citizens, who will now risk losing their properties. He specifically ruled out the confiscation of assets acquired through remittances received from abroad.

The bill was tentatively backed by 100 members of the 132-seat National Assembly. They included deputies from the ruling My Step bloc and the opposition Bright Armenia. Some deputies linked to theRHK leader Edmon Marukyan voiced some misgivings about the effectiveness of the measure, and said that corrupt officials who registered their wealth in their relatives’ names may well let it off the hook. He added that his party will propose a number of amendments when the bill is debated in its second reading.

The opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) also said that it will propose changes to the bill. BHK deputies abstained from Thursday’s parliament vote.

Other critics of the government have challenged the legality of the government plans for asset seizures. They also claim that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is intent on a far-reaching redistribution of property in the country.

The government has denied having such plans. He insisted in December that the planned asset forfeiture is essential for fighting corruption and will not be arbitrary.

Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan said government will do the best at the time, however. Speaking at a cabinet meeting, the former banker said he would do his best to assist those investors and lead to capital flight from Armenia.

**Armenia to Test Teenaged Girls For Infertility**

By Ani Meljumyan

YEREVAN ( Eurasianet.org ) – Armenia’s government is undertaking a new effort to reverse the country’s demographic decline, the result of two factors: by testing the fertility of teenage girls.

Armenians have long been concerned about the declining population of the country, which currently stands at about 3 million. According to the latest projections from the United Nations Population Fund, that number is expected to decline further, to about 2.4 million by 2050.

Former Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan announced in 2017 a plan to increase the population to 4 million by 2040 by increasing the birthrate and discouraging emigration. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, taking over after the next, one-week Sargsyan by promising to boost the population to 5 million by 2040.

Health Minister Arsen Torosyan has rolled out the new government’s program, and it included three components. The first is “additional screening of 15-year-old girls, who are entering puberty, for fertility problems and to prevent and cure infertility,” Torosyan said during a government meeting on Wednesday. The newly married couples will be provided medical checkups “to identify and treat most of the problems that occur during pregnancy planning,” he said. And third, the government will expand a program providing prenatal exams “to reduce the number of miscarriages,” Torosyan said.

“The program is aimed at carrying out demographic reforms and promote-" fertility," he said.

Public reaction to the proposal so far has been mixed. Some families found out that their female family members had the test on purpose, with the circle of women who had the test are not well with some.

One Facebook user writing under Torosyan’s post announcing the policy, suggested that it was sexist, to which Torosyan replied: “Our boys have been examined for a long time now as military conscripts. I would ask you to demand that they have a test for cancer too.”

This “kind of wording only aggravates the long-rooted subconscious under-standing that women are important for infertility,” the user responded in turn.

Another commenter asked, “What about men? Don’t men want a baby but who aren’t married?"

Most of the commenters under Torosyan’s post were women, but of the few men who commented most were supportive of the new plan.

(The text continues from page 09)
The renovation of two more classrooms are being completed at present thanks to the donations of Karen Vartanian, José Lamounier, and the Toutounian family and friends, who raised money in honor of Zaghig Chapjian, and the Mikhjian family and friends, who raised money in honor of Zorek Mavian. This classroom will be named after Robert Khatchig Karagosian, and the Mikhjian family and friends, who raised money in honor of Zorek Mavian, and it only took some ten days. The inauguration took place in October of that year, and Varoujan Stratian, director of the Tchotcharan Institute, happened to be present. He was so impressed that he and his institute decided to sponsor the renovation of the second classroom, and then a third. This started something like a chain reaction, and many others began sponsoring classrooms and naming them after their loved ones or Armenian national heroes. These initial donors, all acting within the course of one year, include Arvedis and Arskhaloys Dilmanian of Montreal, Haritch and Viviane Simonian of Egypt, and the Basmandjians of Toronto. The Montreal Tekeyan chapter, the Kavaldjianas of Montreal, the Montreal chapter of the Rotary Club and many others followed, thus bringing the total number of renovated classrooms to 15. Soon, the Mavian classroom will be the 16th.

The Berdzo is a municipality, seeing that Tekeyan’s initiative has led to new classroom facilities being hosted in an old school building, undertook the renovation of the school’s roof, which has been completed as of 2019. The newly renovated classrooms will no longer be subject to water leaks and potential damage. Throughout this period, Manoukian has cemented his interest in the school and is serving as coordinator in North America of the renovation Fundraising efforts. Sponsoring the renovation of a classroom is a wonderful way to both help the future of Artsakh by helping its children and honoring a loved one. It usually can be done for the sum of US $4,000. Sanitary facilities are incessant and badly needed. Modern plumbing and bathroom installation can be completed through a US $32,000 donation. All donations are tax deductible and are used 100 percent for the intended purpose without the deduction of any administrative costs. Commemorative plaques are placed at each classroom acknowledging the donor and dedicating it to the person for whom the donation was done. The process is transparent and the progress of the renovation work is followed on regular basis. A budget will be presented and will be followed. The effect of such acts of philanthropy should not be underestimated on the young generation of Artsakh. Aside from the immediate impact on their lives, it helps revitalize the Berdzo region by giving a boost to the local economy and morale, improves the education of the local populace, and helps in the repopulation of this region which is so strategic for Armenia and Artsakh’s security. This project, in other words, will make Berdzo a prosperous region for others to settle and raise children. This is how this strategic corridor will stay Armenian and never be subject to trade disputes.

For more information on helping Berdzo, email Arto Manoukian at manoukj@gmail.com or contact TCA headquarters (tel. 617 924-4455, address 255 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472).
French Armenians Raise Alarm about Mayoral Candidate

PARIS (Armenpress) – Rechida Dati, nominated as a candidate for Paris Mayor, has close links with Azerbaijan and its authorities, the Coordination Council of Armenian organizations of France Murad Papazian and Ara Toranyan, editor-in-chief of Nouvelles d’Arménie, and member of Beaux France City Council Patrick Caram said in an article published in the online platform Marianne.

The article notes that Dati is known for her close links with Azerbaijani authorities. She has been member of Assembly of the Friends of Azerbaijan. They also note she was against the Azerbaijani Laundromat investigation into the European Parliament.

Azerbaijani friends of the ruling regime were apparent in 2011, when she organized a dinner in honor of First Lady of Azerbaijan Mehriban Aliyeva. She spoke against Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) particularly after the April war of 2016.

The elections will be held on March 15-22.

Road to Patriarchate of Jerusalem Renovated

JERUSALEM (Public Radio of Armenia) – The Jerusalem Municipality is renovating the road from Jaffa Gate, passing Zion Gate towards the Jewish Quarter, which is one of the main entrances to the Old City, and also the main entrance to the Armenian Patriarchate.

The renovation is part of a larger road construction project, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem informs.

The road surface of Armenian Patriarchate Road had become quite uneven, as well as the cobblestones of pedestrian area in front of the gate of St. James Monastery.

The Jerusalem Municipality therefore decided to renew these roads, a decision the Armenian Patriarchate was immediately in favor of. The Municipality planned to do renovation and renewal on the road around the clock, and only partial closures of the road, in a way that the Armenian Quarter would stay accessible.

At the end of January this year, after Armenian Christmas, part of the Armenian Patriarchate Road from the Kibble was closed, and entrance and exit were temporary through Zion Gate.

The renovation has almost been completed.

Cyprus Hospital Suspends Admissions After Surgeon Diagnosed With Coronavirus

ATHENS (Reuters) – Cyprus’ largest medical facility suspended admissions on March 10 after a heart surgeon tested positive for coronavirus.

The 64-year-old surgeon, who headed up the cardiology ward at Nicosia General Hospital, was one of the first two coronavirus cases diagnosed in Cyprus on Monday. He had recently returned from Britain.

By early Tuesday authorities were tracing about 150 people he had come into contact with, including patients and other medical personnel.

The hospital halted all admissions, outpatient clinics, surgeries and visits for 48 hours and said it would gradually discharge or move patients from the heart surgery ward, where they were under treatment.

“What happened to us was probably the worst scenario,” Constantinos Ioannou, health minister of the divided island, which is internationally recognized as a sovereign country, told Sigma TV.

Cyprus was split in a Turkish invasion in 1974 triggered by a brief Greek Cypriot coup. The Turkish Cypriot north recorded its first case on Tuesday, a German tourist.

She had been taken to a hospital in Nicosia for treatment while the group she traveled with from Germany was quarantined at their hotel, Turkey’s state-owned Anadolu said, citing a local news agency.

Life in Armenia Seems Back to Normal as Government Advances End to Travel Restrictions

BRUSSELS – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan arrived in Brussels on a working visit on March 9. The head of the Armenian government met with European Council President Charles Michel. After a formal photo session, the Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of the European Council discussed a wide range of issues related to EU-Armenia cooperation.

The meeting focused on the reform process underway in Armenia.

Welcoming Nikol Pashinyan’s visit, Charles Michel said it was a good opportunity to discuss cooperation prospects, including the effective implementation of democratic reforms in Armenia.

Pashinyan appreciated EU’s support of the reforms being implemented in Armenia and expressed confidence that the EU-Armenia interaction will continue to develop effectively during Charles Michel’s tenure as President of the European Council.

The European Union is our key partner in advancing the reforms; we have felt EU’s backing all the way through the reform process,” Nikol Pashinyan said.

The parties exchanged views on a broad range of issues related to cooperation between Armenia and the European Union. They highlighted the need for close cooperation between Armenian parliamentarians and EPP faction deputies in the European Parliament.

Touching on Armenia’s judicial reform, Pashinyan gave details of the reforms being implemented in Armenia and expressed readiness to promote the development and deepening of cooperation with Armenia.
Fr. Krikor Zakaryan
Appointed New Pastor at St. Vartan Armenian Church

OAKLAND, Calif. – Rev. Krikor Zakaryan has been named parish priest for St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church. He arrives from St. Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church of the Desert in Rancho Mirage, where he served as parish priest for 10 years. Zakaryan is no stranger to St. Vartan Church having served in Oakland for eight months as a deacon alongside the late, Rev. Mesrob Sarafian in 2009. He was born in 1977 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria and received his primary education at the Dimitr Blagoev school there. He continued his education at the Victoria and Krikor Tutundjian Armenian school, graduating in 1992. Between 1997 and 1999, he served in the Bulgarian army. In 2003, he was admitted to the Alex and Marie Manoogian Seminary of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. His dedication to the seminary and his high marks earned Zakaryan numerous awards. He graduated in 2007. He received the rank of Fourth-Degree Acolyte of the Armenian Holy Apostolic Church from Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem and was ordained to the Diaconate by Archbishop Nourhan Manougian. On October 13, 2009, Zakaryan was ordained into the priesthood by Archbishop Hovnan Derelian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. Zakaryan completed his Masters Degree in Theology in 2014 at the Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, and also completed a Youth Ministry Certificate program at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena in 2017. He has been actively involved as a Religious Advisor for the Diocesan Christian Education Council (CEO), Camp Committee and Camp Board, serving the youth on a Diocesan level. Fr. Krikor Zakaryan is married to Anoush Yazdahyan from Bulgaria and they have two daughters, Emma and Grace.

Dr. Lilit Garibyan

Garibyan Brings Power of Lasers to Her Native Land

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (Harvard Gazette) – When Lilit Garibyan left her native Armenia in 1991, the Eurasian nation was at war with neighboring Azerbaijan, and Garibyan was a 12-year-old who knew she would go back someday, but, she later decided, not before she had something to offer.

Garibyan returned in 2013, bringing medical expertise and high-tech lasers to the capital, Yerevan. On that first trip, she and the two doctors who accompanied her worked long days treating disfiguring skin conditions, including scarring, the bright-red vascular tumor called hemangioma, and the capillary malformation that results in the discolored skin known as portwine stain.

Garibyan, a Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) dermatologist and assistant professor of dermatology at Harvard Medical School, has since visited annually and worked with U.S. and Armenian partners to secure donated lasers, train local physicians to run them, and establish a nonprofit, Face of Angel, to foster the work.

"It was emotional to go back after being away for 22 years, to see the country you came from. I saw my relatives," Garibyan said. "I hadn't gone back because I wanted to go back when I could give something back. I didn't just want to go say, 'Hi, I'm Lilit. Nice to see you again.'"

Garibyan, a physician-scientist at MGH's Wellman Center for Photomedicine, said that the targeted conditions can cause serious complications, including blindness when they occur near the eye, cognitive issues if in the brain, or blindness and bleeding dysfunction in affected body parts, particularly the hand and foot. But, she added, the most common — and most debilitating — effects are often psychological.

"The psychological impact is huge," Garibyan said. "Kids don't want to go outside. They don't want to interact with others as they feel embarrassed. They're ostracized because they appear different from others."

In the U.S., port-wine stains are typically treated with lasers when patients are young, as are hemangiomas when they fail to fade over time, as often occurs. The precision laser treatment, given over the course of several months, can effectively erase them, Garibyan said. In developing and middle-income nations, however, both the sophisticated lasers used to seal off leaky, malformed blood vessels and knowledge of how to run them are scarce. Those barriers to treatment are what Garibyan and a team from the Wellman Center, including the center's director, Professor of Dermatology R. Buon Anderson — who ran a similar program in Vietnam — seek to clear.

Statistics aren't available about how widespread the conditions are in Armenia, in part because, without effective treatment, individuals tend to keep to themselves or hide affected skin under clothing, according to Khachanush Hakobyan, executive director of the Armenian American Wellness Center, one of two centers collaborating with the American doctors. Seven years into the program, demand for treatment shows no signs of lessening. The Armenian American Wellness Center — which charges nothing to treat children — is actively reaching out, advertising on Facebook, and appearing on local television programs, and the patients keep coming.

— By Alvin Powell

Glendale Man Gets Over 3 Years in Prison After Swindling Banks Out of $2.1 million

GLENDALE (News Press) — A Glendale man was sentenced to 37 months in federal prison on Tuesday, March 2, after pleading guilty last May to using the stolen personal information of licensed dentists in California and would use them to open accounts at several banks.

According to the indictment filed against Yesayan and two co-conspirators, the trio would purchase the stolen personal information of licensed dentists in California and would use them to open accounts at several banks.

Yesayan and one of his accomplices “would impersonate dentists and submit change of address application requests to the Dental Board of California ... with the addresses of the sham dental offices so that the impersonated dentists’ mail would be sent to the addresses” the three controlled, according to the indictment.

Authorities said the group would then apply for lines of credit that banks offered to dentists and once approved they would “submit numerous fraudulent credit claims in the names of fake patients for procedures purportedly performed by the impersonated dentists.”

The scheme continued from October 2010 until March 2014.

Yesayan eventually pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud in May 2019, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.

One alleged co-conspirator of Yesayan, 45-year-old Varooj Arakelian of Glendale, is scheduled to appear in court on June 23 for his trial in the case while the third co-conspirator, 42-year-old Arin Sarkisians, also of Glendale, has charges pending against him.

— By Andy Nguyen

Nayiri Nahabedian Re-elected to Glendale Unified Board of Education

GLENDALE — Nayiri Nahabedian has been re-elected to the Glendale Unified School District’s Board of Education. This will be her fourth term on the Board.

She is the daughter of Khachag and Ani Nahabedian. Khachag Nahabedian is a member of the Tyeshyan Cultural Association's Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Committee.

Nayiri Nahabedian is a professor of social studies at California State University, Los Angeles.

Several times, during previous summers, she has gone to Armenia to make available her vast knowledge in her teaching career to the teachers of the country, so they can improve their teaching techniques, augmented by the latest technological tools.

She has been instrumental in passing an ordinance to close the Glendale public schools on April 24 every year, in commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.
My Hajimom
A Survivor in the New World

By Ruth Bedevian

My maternal great-grandmother passed into her eternal rest when I was 8 months old. Anna Najimian is sleeping in Flower Hill Cemetery in North Bergen, NJ. Indeed, she is far from her birthplace of Dikranagerd, the ancient city founded by Tigranes the Great, and ruled by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, ruler of the Ottoman Empire (circa early 20th century).

In 1900 Hajimom arrived at Ellis Island with an identification tag pinned to her coat. Her 12-year-old grandson, Khoren, her newly remarried daughter, Soghome and son-in-law Shahpaz were temporarily living in a boarding house in Pawtucket, Rhode Island when she married my father in 1930. In the first year of the Great Depression, the house at 511 Dewey Avenue in Cliffside Park, NJ when she married my father in 1930. In the upstairs apartment of the two-family house, Hajimom labored in the textile factories to supplement her son Shahpaz’s income and the baby, Karnig (1902), Vasken (1904) and the baby, Karnig (1909). A Growing Family.

My mother came from Pawtucket, RI to live in the upstairs apartment of the two-family house at 511 Dewey Avenue in Clffside Park, NJ when she married my father in 1930. In the first year of the Great Depression, the house was already occupied by Soghome, Shahpaz, Hajimom and my father. Khoren, was married to Mary Esperian of Haverhill, in 1912 and lived elsewhere.

Hajimom was a grand old lady, as my mother described her: “She was filled with wisdom and gentleness. She was very clean and neat. She wore separate cuffs that covered her dress sleeves up to her elbows so that she would not stain her clothing while going about her chores. She had long, snow-white hair that she combed carefully and tied into a soft knot at the nape of her neck.”

Karrig liked to brag, “She rolled her own cigarettes. Smoking never hurt Hajimom. She did many foolish things, but she never yelled at me. She simply said, ‘Jahel eh, Jahel eh. Ge medzna.’ (She’s immature, immaturity. She’ll grow up.)”

Cousin Janet admired her wisdom, “When Shahpaz would throw himself into a violent rage, she would say, ‘Obedience comes — It’s no use! She possessed good sense to overcome the Baron’s tirades.”

Karrig recalls with a smile, “I took the train from Providence to visit Alice and was given Hajimom’s bed to sleep. She had a very bumpy mattress and I had a very uncomfortable night. I asked how Hajimom could sleep in that bed because she had a dainty body.”

Uncle Joe recalls with a smile, “We all loved Hajimom. I did many foolish things, but she did not want to excite me for fear that I might miscarry the baby.”

Alice continued, “Karrig and I had returned from seeing ‘King Kong,’ a very popular movie about a gorilla who was captured in Africa and brought to New York City in a cage. He escapes and there is a famous scene where he is roaring from the top of the Empire State Building.”

“araye, there’s a rat. A big, black rat!”

Alice’s piercing screams propelled Karrig from the radiator in the bedroom as I was undressing. Thinking that Karrig had dropped a sock, “I went closer to pick it up.”

Suddenly the “sock” stretched to its full length, wiggled, then darted passed Alice, “A big, black rat!”

Aunt Joey remembers, “We all loved Hajimom. I did many foolish things, but she did not want to excite me for fear that I might miscarry the baby.”

Alice continued, “Karrig and I had returned from seeing ‘King Kong,’ a very popular movie about a gorilla who was captured in Africa and brought to New York City in a cage. He escapes and there is a famous scene where he is roaring from the top of the Empire State Building.”
and she did not see well, but she baked the cake and burned. Her hands trembled from old age.

She mixed milk, sugar, and flour in a bowl and poured the bake an American-style cake. Curious to experiment with recipes. One day she taught Hajimom to.

Jeffreys would call up to Alice, “Come on down. See the neighbors. They struck up a friendship and Mrs. Shahbazian took the opportunity to invite them to her house. Jeffreys is the best neighbor. He has a dozen Armenian cookbooks! It must be partic-

cialty. They stem from the tradition and Thanksgiving Day is not complete when Hajimom’s “Dzedzodz” is a Shahbazian family dish.

Hajimom’s nephew’s wife, Lucia, had passed away. “Tookman brought a red-headed woman from her neighborhood. She confided in her grandson Karnig, “Joey told me that she stayed here. (I am comfortable here.) “I look out the window and watch the children play and I am happy here.”

Hajimom was ailing for two weeks. Simply tired, her age was slowing her down. Joey invited her, “It’s too hard for Alice with the children. Come by me and I’ll take care of you.” Hajimom sighed, “Hankisd em hoss.” (I am comfortable here.)

She confided in her grandson Karnig, “Joey says I should go by her. It’s too hard for Alice. If you want me to go, I will go.”

Kargin assured his beloved grandmother, “Hajimom, this is your place. You are no trouble for Alice.”

Hajimom thoughtfully nodded her head and everyone ate it.

Kargin was also fond of telling the story of how Hajimom would bake the cookies (butter cookies) and hide them by locking them in the drawer below the dresser. Kargin would go out to get the drawer above opened.

He laughed and laughed at his grandmother’s bewilderment. She could not comprehend how they were missing when she had locked the drawer so securely.

Hajimom taught her grandsons to pray. She taught them a traditional prayer to be recited before sleep. Each grandson learned it, but it was Vasken who learned it best – so well, that each time he saw his brother Lud in adult years, he would recite the prayer in perfect Dikranagerdsti.

One night the rat woke me up. Faided to Alice, “One night the rat woke me up. My Hajimom told me to respond to his grandmother before all others. Vasken translated this response to his grandmother.

“Then Karney believed me. Everything is settled always. My Hajimom fills my heart. (Ruth Bedoian is a resident of New Jersey. She received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2017. She is a longtime member of the Armenian International Women’s Association.)

Columbia to Host Talk on Politics of Early Armenian Migration to US

NEW YORK – Dr. David E. Gutman, associate professor of history at Massachusetts College, will present his recently published book, The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885-1915 (Edwardward Univ. Press), at Columbia University, Knox Hall, Conference Room 208, 606 West 122nd St, New York, NY 10027, on Thursday, March 26, at 7 p.m.

The program is co-sponsored by the Columbia Armenian Center; the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and Research Institute on Turkey, Columbia Armenian Migration to North America, 1885-1915 tells the story of Armenian migration to North America in the late Ottoman empire, and investigates its efforts to pre-

vent it. The views have changed, and important topics have emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These topics include the smuggling networks, frustrating the enforce-
Multicultural Mosaic Foundation of Colorado Votes to Recognize the Armenian Genocide

AURORA, Colo. – The Multicultural Mosaic Foundation (MMF), a Colorado-based nonprofit organization which derives its inspiration from the Turkish Muslim religious leader Fethullah Gülen, voted to recognize the Armenian Genocide on March 7.

MMF issued a statement on March 8 explaining the context, as follows: "MMF established a committee three years ago tasked with learning what happened in 1915 to the Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire. For the last three years members of this committee have been attending lectures and dialog sessions with scholars of Ottoman history, Armenian history and genocides. Further, committee members engaged in meetings with family members who survived the Armenian Genocide. The study of academic articles, watching documentaries, panel discussions, private discussions were also part of the three-year journey. ‘At the end of the three years the committee decided to vote on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The committee of about 20 members voted unanimously in favor of recognizing the Armenian Genocide. This vote was presented to the board as a recommendation to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Mosaic’s board followed the recommendation of the committee and recognized the Armenian Genocide on March 7, 2020.”

MMF was careful to note in its statement that the decision was made by MMF alone and only reflects its own position, as no other affiliated organization or platform participated in its decision-making process. MMF also defined itself as an organization “dedicated to the promotion of understanding, dialog and peace among all cultures and faith traditions.”

For more information, contact MMF via its website (http://www.mosaicfoundation.org), email contact@mosaicfoundation.org or social media: https://www.facebook.com/mosaicMMF/ and twitter @mosaicMMF.

OBITUARY

Sonia Shiragian Blackwell
Pulitzer Prize Nominee, Dedicated Mother

NEW YORK — Sonia Shiragian Blackwell passed away at McLeod Hospice House on March 3, with her family by her side. She was born in New York on February 22, 1928, the daughter of Rojane Garnarian Shiragian and Arshavir Shiragian. Sonia grew up as a first-generation Armenian immigrant in Washington Heights, before it became famous as “The Heights.” She enjoyed an idyllic childhood, earning her beloved Upper Manhattan with cousins and friends, exploring Fort Tryon Park and the Cloisters, roller skating everywhere, including to the corner store for a nickel ice cream treat. After graduating from the Barnard School for Girls and earning the first place Latin Prize in the entire New York City school system, Sonia attended Smith College and graduated in 1949 with a bachelor’s degree in philosophy. Her vocational passion was writing, and she worked for the Bergen Record (NJ) newspaper for several years after college where she was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Sonia always downplayed the nomination, stating plainly that “everyone is nominated.” She also worked as an Armenian language translator at the United Nations and published a short story in the New Yorker magazine about being Armenian in America. She helped her father, Arshavir Shiragian, write and translate his memoirs, The Legacy, about his role in avenging the Armenian Genocide, which was published in 1976. In the early 1960s, Sonia moved to Washington, DC to work with the senator from New Jersey. There she met and married Frederick Blackwell, her husband of 53 years, and with whom she started their third, and most fulfilling chapter: mother and grandmother, where her extraordinary goodness, compassion, brilliance, and wry humor were always on display. Sonia was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, and a cousin, Robert Pehlivanian, who was like a brother to her. She is survived by her son Dr. Arshavir Blackwell of West Hollywood, CA, her daughter Elizabeth Blackwell Poston (Britt) of Florence, SC, and her daughter Pinky Blackwell Verma (Ochard) of Bethesda, MD. She is also survived by cousins, again as precious to her as siblings: Vashen (Karen) Mimasian of Bradenton, FL, John (Kamee) Pehlivanian of Bay Head, NJ; and Christine (Dr. Robert) Shamsy of Sarasota, FL. Additionally, and to her the most treasured, she is survived by her five grandchildren, whom she adored and nurtured so well, and who in turn adored her. Cathy and Cooper Poston and Zoe, Lucy and Dylan Verma.

The family would like to express their gratitude for the dedicated and loving care provided by her health care assistants, Jeannette and Amanda, who helped her maintain a wonderful quality of life for many years.

Hardy John Margosian Jr.

WATERTOWN — Hardy John Margosian Jr., of Watertown, formerly of Belmont, died on February 22, 1928, as a result of complications of pneumonia. He was the son of the late Hardy John Sr. and Alice (Gedigian) Margosian of Lexington and Watertown. He was a veteran of World War II.

A graduate of Belmont High School, Class of 1949, Hardy was a member of Saint James Armenian Church and sang in the church choir. He was an Eagle Scout (Boy Scouts of America). At the request of the family, funeral arrangements are private. Remembrances may be offered at bedrosianfuneralhome.com.

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Garibyan Brings Power of Lasers to Her Native Land

LASERS, from page 5

Hook Stepanyan, an Armenian physician whom the MGH team trained to use the lasers, said the center sees about 20 new patients a month, and the yearly totals have increased to about 250 today and are still rising.

Stepanyan, who has become a local expert in the laser treatment and is consulted widely in the region, said that what has been helpful to him has been not only the initial training, but also the ongoing collaboration, which allows him to send images and consult with the MGH physicians on tricky cases. He's also traveled to Boston several times for the Harvard continuing medical education laser conferences.

Mary Aloyan, 14, from the village of Gyamri, 160 miles from Yerevan, is about 90 percent free of her port-wine stain on her face. She said the laser procedures can be painful, but not intolerably so, and her parents never put a bandage on her face. She said the laser treatment and is consulted widely in the region, said that what has been helpful to him has been not only the initial training, but also the ongoing collaboration, which allows him to send images and consult with the MGH physicians on tricky cases. He's also traveled to Boston several times for the Harvard continuing medical education laser conferences.

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Garibyan is no stranger to family sacrifice. Her parents left Armenia for Glendale, Calif., fearing that her younger brother would be pressed into service amid their nation’s widening war with Azerbaijan.

Garibyan arrived at Los Angeles International Airport speaking not a word of English, and she still recalls the confusion and dislocation of her first months in America — especially in the classroom — as she wrestled with a new language. Garibyan’s mother thought their stay would be brief, but months became years, laden with cultural and financial challenges. As Garibyan’s English improved, so did her grades. Against the advice of a high school guidance counselor who thought community college was her best bet, Garibyan applied to Harvard University of California, Los Angeles, and was admitted. She studied science and spent a consequential summer at the University of California at San Francisco lab of Donald Gurnem, a Harvard Medical School alumnus who urged her to apply to Harvard’s M.D./Ph.D. program.

Garibyan graduated with a doctorate from Harvard’s Biological and Biomedical Sciences program in 2007, and then earned her M.D. from HMS in 2009. After her residency in dermatology, Garibyan encountered a high school friend, Ray Jahan, who was working as a fellow with Anderson at MGH’s Wellness Center. Drawn by the promise of conducting translational research that could have a direct impact on patients’ lives, Garibyan joined the lab. Now she’s conducting studies on an injectable coolant that she and her colleague developed and in the lab. They intend to use this for removing disease-causing fat tissue in the body and for treating pain. This coolant is designed to reduce pain by numbing nerves without resorting to the extreme cold typically used in cryotherapy. Garibyan hopes her discovery will reduce or eliminate the need for opioids to treat pain, thus helping fight the deadly epidemic of drug abuse ravaging the nation.

The Armenia program grew out of Anderson’s earlier efforts in Vietnam, where he and colleagues provided surgery for the same vascular problems as in the Armenia program. Garibyan met an Armenian plastic surgeon who was visiting Boston University and who’s spent some time at Anderson’s lab. After seeing their work, he urged them to bring their expertise with laser surgery for vascular anomalies to Armenia.

“Rox said, ‘OK, let’s go.’” Garibyan said. “I was like, ‘What? That’s it?’ “

That first trip, in 2013, coincided with a plastic surgery conference in the capital and included Garibyan, Anderson, and Jahan. They brought a borrowed laser and focused on treating scars, port-wine stains, and hemangiomas.

“The first day we saw over 70 consultations. There were so many people wanting to be seen for scars and vascular anomalies,” Garibyan said. “We had to use our creativity and imagination. We were only given the dentist’s room to work out of, so we divided the room into three sections: pre-op, treatment, and post-op. In addition to consulting with patients and treating those they could, they also taught local physicians to use the lasers and gave lectures at the plastic surgery conference.

“I was really happy because I had now created something where I could meaningfully give back,” Garibyan said. “We decided that we will do this every year, and we could make it into the same program that the Vietnam project had become.”

The program benefited early on from the involvement of California dermatologist Christine Avakoff and her husband, physician John Poochigian, who have traveled regularly to Armenia since 2000. It was Avakoff who introduced Garibyan to the Armenian American Wellness Center, which, along with Arabkir Hospital, has become one of the collaboration’s primary sites in Armenia. Avakoff, who was retiring, donated the first laser to the center — six have been donated so far, with the major donors being the Candela and Quanta laser companies. Garibyan also worked with Avakoff and Poochigian to establish Face of Angel to support work there.

Avakoff and Poochigian are of Armenian ancestry and were struck on their travels by the number of people with visible vascular anomalies that are relatively easily treated in the U.S. Avakoff said she recalled one boy who had a port-wine stain on his feet, which bled when he walked. Others had gone blind because the condition had been untreated, while still others had suffered disfiguring surgeries using 1970s-era lasers. Avakoff said.

“There were people who felt that they could not work or face anybody with this problem. It’s a real social concern,” Avakoff said. “One of them found out I was the one who sent the laser, and she started crying. It was such an easy thing. You do these treatments, and the results are so amazing.”

While Garibyan is planning a trip with several colleagues to Yerevan this spring, word is spreading about the program and its precede-

ors in Vietnam. Avakoff said the program has begun to draw patients from neighboring countries, including Russia. A lawmaker in Montenegro heard about the program through one of the participating physicians and asked whether they’d bring it there.

“We might go there for a few days on the way back from Armenia, do an assessment, and see if they need it,” Garibyan said.

(This feature originally appeared in the Gazette on March 4.)

COMMUNITY NEWS
COMMUNITY NEWS

NAASR and ATP Join Forces to Report on Forests And the Green Revolution in Armenia

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) is co-hosting a panel discussion titled “Green Revolution: Armenia’s Vision to Fight Global Climate Change,” on Wednesday, March 18, at 7:30 p.m.

This event will include a report by Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and Boston-area experts who participated in the “Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia” conference at American University of Armenia (AUA) in October.

ATP and AUA Acopian Center for the Environment convened the inaugural Forest Summit October 20-23 in Armenia. Though small in size, Armenia has shown renewed its political commitment to protecting and expanding its forest cover. As part of its pledge to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Armenia has committed to double its forest cover by 2050. The summit brought local and international experts and stakeholders together for the first time to discuss the challenges and opportunities around this ambitious commitment.

The summit was opened by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who emphasized that forests and environmental issues are a high priority for his administration. “There was a huge amount of interest in the Forest Summit, from activists to local and international experts who came together to exchange ideas and help chart the way forward to expand Armenia’s forest cover,” noted ATP Executive Director Jeanmarie Papelian. “ATP is excited to be a part of this movement, given our 25 years of experience in this field. And this event at NAASR is the kick-off to report the outcomes on the eve of the International Day of Forests which we celebrate every year.”

“As global citizens concerned about the future of our planet, we are proud that Armenia and NAASR is part of the discussion around how trees can solve pressing issues like climate change,” explained NAASR Director of Academic Affairs Marc Mamigonian. “This event is a wonderful follow up to the panel we held on linkages between the environment and national security, and it brings us up to date by putting it in the context of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia.”

The panel will be moderated by Prof. Anna Ohanyan, professor of political science and international studies at Stonehill College, and Papelian. They will be joined by Guy Hydrick, a geographic information system (GIS) expert and PhD candidate at Clark University who participated in the Forest Summit. Hydrick’s doctoral thesis is based on ATP’s extensive monitoring data, which is unprecedented in the field of urban forestry.

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This event, to be held at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, is free and open to the public. Additional cosponsors include the Greater Boston Nejdeh chapter of the Armenian Youth Federation. The program is part of the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

Armenians to Participate in Greek Independence Day Parade

NEW YORK — The Armenian-American community will participate in the annual Greek Independence Day Parade, that will take place on Sunday, March 29, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., along 5th Avenue.

The annual event, sponsored by The Federation of Hellenic Societies of Greater New York, celebrates the 199th anniversary of the Hellenic Independence with an expected attendance of 25,000 participants. The parade, which is free and open to the public, will champion the rich Hellenic cultural heritage and feature ethnic costumes and traditional Greek music.

Each year the Knights of Vartan, a national fraternal Armenian organization, shows its solidarity with the Greek-American community by sponsoring an Armenian-themed float. This year, the Armenian community will have the front position in the parade. “We congratulate the Greek Independence Day of our brothers and sisters,” said Hirant Gulian, Chairman Emeritus of the Knights of Vartan. “We are proud to be annual participants in the parade and represent our Armenian community.”
The Remarkable Photos of Leon Abdalian at JP Library

BOSTON — The works of photographer Leon Hampartzoum Abdalian will be the subject of a talk by Aaron Schmidt at the Jamaica Plain Branch of the Boston Public Library, on Saturday, April 4, 2 to 3 p.m.

Abdalian was born in 1884 in what was Cilician Armenia, then located in the Ottoman Empire (now modern Turkey). He migrated with his family to the United States in April of 1896 and they eventually settled in Jamaica Plain.

It is believed that he was largely self-taught as a photographer. For most of the time he was photographing (1913-1967) he also worked full-time as a conductor on the Boston Elevated Railway. Leon Abdalian was primarily a large-format photographer. His photographs were published in the Boston Globe, Boston Traveler and Boston Herald newspapers. He had photographs published in National Geographic magazine in March of 1920 as part of an article on business in Massachusetts.

Abdalian retired as a conductor in 1951 but continued his career as a photographer into the 1960s almost to the year of his death in 1967. After his death, the Boston Public Library acquired approximately 500 of his negatives from his daughter, Lillian A. Clough. The remainder of his personal collection was given to the BPL in 2003, through a generous gift from the Estate of Arnold P. and Lillian A. Clough.

Aaron Schmidt of the Boston Public Library’s Prints Department will talk about this remarkable resident of JP and his amazing photographs. Since 1991 Aaron has been working with the BPL’s photo collections, including the Abdalian Collection.

The event is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. The library is located at 30 South Street.

ABOVE: A Boston bridge over Charles River in the 1920s
LEFT: A scene from Boston
RIGHT: A photo of the old Boston City Hall in the 1920s
**The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra Aims To Conquer the World**

**By Gaia Ghazaryan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – For number of generations, Armenia has been presenting its musical creations to the world. Composers, performers and orchestras have been awarded with recognition and admiration from established names in the sphere and most importantly, they have received the love of foreign audiences.

The best example of such success is the sensation that the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia brought with its birth in 2005, which later on became Armenian State Symphony Orchestra (ASSO). The orchestra was founded by Sergey Smbatyan (the artistic director and principal conductor of the ASSO) when he was only 18. There could be nothing more powerful than young musicians with hearts full of energy and passion aiming towards raising awareness and sharing their inner musical world with public. During these 15 years since its founding, ASSO managed to receive international recognition, as well as to perform at multiple international festivals, performances and even recordings. They took over the most notable concert halls of classical music such as Konzerthaus in Berlin, Musikverein in Vienna, The Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and many more. Their performances have been broadcast internationally as well.

Besides all the success ASSO had, Smbatyan and the orchestra members are contributing to the growth of our new generation with the help of various education-al and charity projects in universities, schools and orphanages. Smbatyan’s main goal is to educate the younger generation and uncover the true meaning of classical music to people.

In 2009, the UNICEF Children Orchestra was created with the aim of spreading better understanding of classical music through fascinating performances all over Europe and Armenia. One of the most special and life changing projects ever created for the youngsters was in September 2016, which was directed by Sergey individually. 1144 Armenian musicians were gathered together from all over Armenia and Artsakh with the same goal to perform together as one “Generation of Independence” Orchestra and Choir, for the concert dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Armenia’s independence. That was a unique opportunity given to the young musicians to gain experience of being a part of an orchestra and express their inner increasing aspirations for performing.

Smbatyan recently sat down for an interview, where he expounded on his love of music.

*continued in next page*

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**Katarina Kacunkovic**

*Through my Grammy I Feel My Armenian Roots*

**By Artsvi Bakhchyanoy**

SPECIAL TO THE MIRROR-SPECTATOR

YEREVAN/BELGRADE – Katarina Kacunkovic is a Serbian singer, songwriter, producer, vocal educator and radio host. She was born in Belgrade, in the family of famous sculptor Milorad Basic Rasa, and judge Mirjana Radic (maiden name Miljkovic) of Serbian-Armenian origin. Her maternal grandmother was Pergriu, the daughter of Tatos Kandikian and Perz American, originally from Keghi (near Erzrum), and Constantinople. Although Katarina received classical music education, her solo debut was in 1991 with the Belgrade Radio and Television Jazz Orchestra. During her 20-year professional career, Kacunkovic has collaborated with various local and foreign musicians in different forms (concerts, writing lyrics and music). In addition, she has been a voice coach, a radio host, and music programmer.


Dear Katarina, you are a well-known singer in Serbia. What do you consider as the main achievement in your artistic career?

To be honest, my greatest achievement overall is my family: my three gorgeous daughters, and my marriage that has lasted almost 30 years. Considering the fact that the mentioned period of time, we in Serbia have gone through some pretty turbulent moments, I think I have managed to do so many beautiful things artistically, professionally, and yet managed my family to grow alongside my career.

Apart from the period before 1990, when I used to perform as a classical singer, as well as a studio musician, my very important debut was in 1991 when I became the soloist with the Serbian Radio and Television Big Band. I was pregnant with my first child at the time. My jazz career began then.

How did it happen that you and your brother, Martin Basic, being born in the family of a sculptor and a judge, became musicians?

We grew up in a very artistic environment. Our house was always full of poets, painters and musicians. At one point I thought I would become a painter, but it didn’t seem to be for me, since it involved more of a solitary life. I liked company, and I liked the stage. Plus, I grew up surrounded with really great music: from jazz to rock. When I was a teenager see KATRINIA, page 17

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**Prof. Maranci to Present New Ani Cathedral Discoveries at NAASR Lecture**

BELMONT, Mass. – The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and Dedan-Osterrtl Chair in Armenian Art and Architecture at Tufts University will present an illustrated lecture by Prof. Christina Maranci titled “New Discoveries at Ani Cathedral” on Wednesday, March 25, at 7:30 p.m., in Bateman Hall on the third floor of the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave. A reception will follow the program in the Shirkanos Solarium.

Hidden for centuries under whitewash, the paintings of the apse of Ani Cathedral, one of the most famous of Armenian churches, were barely known by scholars. Image software technology has now brought many more details of the composition to light, enough to identify the scene as a beautiful Vision of Ezekiel. It has also revealed an apse inscrip-tion on the south wall.

The images recovered from Ani Cathedral reveal some of the most elegant wall paintings known from medieval Armenia. The technology used to discover them is, moreover, broadly applicable and accessible. Preliminary work with other whiteswashed Armenian churches at Ani and in the vicinity promises to enlarge significantly the corpus of medieval Armenian art, bringing long-hidden masterpieces to light.

Maranci is Arthur H. Dadian and Ara T. Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art and serves as Chair of the Department of Art and Art History at Tufts University. She has published and lectured widely, having authored three previous monographs and more than 70 essays, articles and reviews, including the books Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation (2001), Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia (2015) and The Art of Armenia: An Introduction (2019).

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**Ara Malikian Documentary East Coast Premieres at Salem Film Fest**

SALEM, Mass. – On Sunday March 22, at 3:30 p.m., Salem Film Fest will host the East Coast Premiere of the documentary “Arta Malikian A Life Among Strings.”

The National Park Visitor Center is located in the center of Salem’s downtown at 2 Liberty Street. The impressive Peabody Essex Museum is also across the street. It features a vast international collection of both traditional and contemporary art and is another of the Salem Film Fest venues.

Several restaurants and bars surround the temporary art and is another of the Salem Film Fest venues.

Tickets for the screening are $13 for Adults and $11 Seniors, Active Military, Veterans and Students. The Fest is offering group rate discounts to the screening of “Ara Malikian.”

For more information and tickets, visit salemfilmfest.com/2020/movies/ara-malikian-a-life-among-strings/
The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra Aims to Conquer the World

From previous page

What is the story behind the formation of the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra?

The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra was established 15 years ago by 18-year-old students of Yerevan State Conservatory. We acknowledged that our job was studying well at the conservatory and getting our degrees every day. But one day we came up with the idea of doing something special that would take both our friendship and our expertise to a new level. So it occurred to establish an orchestra.

We were pretty young back then and didn’t care about challenges and risks. And this triumph of the young orchestra was what earned us the success of our endeavor. The past 14 years were a unique and fulfilling journey of arduous work, fabulous achievements, warm reception from audiences and continuous enrichment of our repertoires.

I know that you were a very successful violinist, when did you realize that you want to become a conductor?

I was the first time I felt the violin in my small hands and I have not left music since then. A violinist herself, my grandma Tatyana Hayrapetyan introduced the instrument to me and became my first teacher. Actually, she was also the one to make me think about conducting. I was very enthusiastic about the violin and the subtleties of orchestral art and my grand- ma, with her outstanding pedagogical insight, identified my veiled preferences and encouraged me to take my first steps in conducting. I can now say I wasn’t misguided back then.

What were the first expectations from the orchestra?

My foremost expectation was dedication. It is one of the greatest challenges as we attain the targeted heights and invigorates to move forward. My advice to young musicians would be to act with honesty in their work and be true to themselves to handle every task with an ultimate devotion and love. Equipped with these facilities, you are able to overcome any challenge.

What was the most difficult thing you faced during the orchestra’s career?

I don’t like talking about difficulties. There are so many of them, indeed, but none is impossible to overcome if you have a great team of talented people around you. We get over challenges, acknowledge our takeaways, leave them behind and move forward.

What is the best part of being a conductor?

The collective effort of a team of hundreds of orchestra and a conductor creates a spectacular harmony that even- tually evokes beautiful emotions and moments of bliss in the hearts of the audience. Recognizing this is a huge inspiration to every musician.

Are there any future plans for reestablishing the youth orchestra?

We will leave the endeavors of creating youth orchestras to the younger generation. I will be the one to make sure that the same path will be followed.

How did the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia become Armenian State Symphony Orchestra?

This transition took place very naturally. It was to a great extent explained by the acknowl- edge our hard work by the Government of Armenia, along with our increasing popularity and the fondness that our audience had for us. Through this program we are also shaping the future audience that appreciates and under- stands music. We visit schools to have discus- sions about classical music, composers and their works, about the orchestral art, as well as develop insights on the patterns of behavior at classical concerts. Students are also regularly invited to attend our concerts. I believe our endeavor in the domain of education will con- tinue and grow all the more important.

What goal do you set for yourselves before performing? Is there something that you sure- ly want to convey to the audience?

Our main goal is to perform our best, even better than we did before. I would say that this is the maximum level of achievement that we can reach emotionally, but it is hard to set a limit. So we try and transform all the power through our emotions and deliver it to our audience.

Since you perform a lot in general, espe- cially at outstanding venues all over the world, how do you manage to deal with anxiety and nerves? Is there a particular approach to it?

Practice, practice and practice! There is no better cure for that than performing multiple times and getting the right feeling of the stage.

How is ASSO different from other orchestras?

I can name endless examples, but the most significant factor is that the orchestra was born with the help of all the members. Besides being colleagues and playing in the orchestra, we are very bonded outside of our work place and that makes a difference. It makes all situations easier and obstacles swifter to overcome together. The heart and soul we put into our work in the very beginning has remained the same until now. The major role in all of this plays our incredibly gifted and determined conductor who helps us in any possible way, and sincere- ly delivers the energy we need to get through the impossible.

What was the most memorable performance you had, and why?

The most memorable one was surely in 2007 when we performed in Berlin Konzerthaus for the first time. It was also the first time in Berlin and we were totally overwhelmed with the musicality of the city and the greatness of the concert hall. We were still young at the time and everything impressed and touched our emotions with overflowing every single one of our emotions and awoke the love of performance deep in our hearts.

What are the expectations from our new generation of musicians?

I genuinely want the new generation to be more driven by their enthusiasm and use their gift in a right way. Keep it on the highest level and never let the interest towards classical music extinguish. I would like to see them con- tinue the job we have started and encourage the coming generations to do so, by revealing the enchanting power of music.

According to the tradition, with a massive crescendo, ASSO continues to astound musical critics and audiences all over the globe. They left their noticeable mark in musical history of Armenia and all the places they have had the chance to perform. Their story being an inspiration for many young creators, will make them believe that hard work pays off especially when it is done with enormous love and pas- sion. The set standard is very high due to ASSO’s quintessential performances coming straight from the bottoms of their hearts. Hopefully, our next generation of musical geniuses will take the lead and persistently carry out this life changing profession estab- lished 15 years ago.

The violin section

The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra

Sergey Smibyryan conducts the orchestra during rehearsals.

Sergey Smibyryan
New York Concert Featuring Zulal, Perspectives Ensemble, Celebrates Armenian Music

NEW YORK — Perspectives Ensemble, in cooperation with the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, presents “Dark Eyes/New Eyes: A Celebration of Armenian Music,” on Sunday, March 22, at 7 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Chapel of St. James, 1047 Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street.

The performance will feature Zulal, a vocal trio composed of Teni Apelian, Anais Alexandra Teferian, and Yeraz Margarian, and Perspectives Ensemble members, including flautist and Artistic Director Sato Moughalian, harpist Stacey Shames, and percussionist John Hadfield. Admission is free and running time is 70 minutes, no intermission.

“Dark Eyes/New Eyes” celebrates Armenian music in a program of village songs, as well as other traditional and composed pieces by historic and contemporary Armenian composers. The concert pays homage to the journeys of our families, ancestors, and departed ones. Six musicians offer lively and contemplative music, including araragians (Armenian hymns), songs of King Smbat, and the beloved Lullaby from Armenia’s folk melodies, while introducing a sophisticated lyricism and energy. The trio has performed in such esteemed venues as the Getty Museum, Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, New York Symphony Space and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts along with performances for the John F. Kennedy Center to Yerevan’s Komitas Chamber Music Ensemble, and in several new arrangements by Yerevan-based composer Artur Akhalyan — who is known for his wide-ranging career as a chamber musician, solo and orchestral player, and is artistic director of Perspectives Ensemble, which she founded at 930 University Avenue. She has served as principal flute for American Modern Ensemble and Catapult Opera; was a 12-year member of Quintet of the Americas; guest artist with groups including the Ibarra Winds, American Ballet Theatre, Oratorio Society of New York, American Symphony Orchestra, and Orquesta Sinfónica do Estado São Paulo, Brazil, with whom she recorded Villa-Lobos’s Bachianas. She is a member of the Si Newhouse Foundation, and many generations of our dear friends Hester Diamond, Roberta Gerhard, Benet Caslabasance, Charles Tomlinson Griffes - An American Original and Music of the Mountains—Aaron Copland’s Appalachian Spring and the Traditional Music that Inspired It.

Praise from the New York Times includes “first-rate performances by accomplished musicians,” “superb recital by the Perspectives Ensemble,” “rhythms were remarkably precise, supple and subtle.” Under Moughalian’s leadership, the ensemble creates musical events and writings that explore and contextualize the works of composers and visual artists. Its presentations, recordings, and publications — which can be heard on all major music platforms, as well as in live performances captured on YouTube — offer interpretations and viewpoints informed by the cultural and historical influences prevailing upon artists, and often bridge and integrate the musical, visual, and literary arts. Perspectives Ensemble is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. www.perspectivesensemble.com

The group takes Armenia’s village folk melodies and weaves intricate arrangements that pay tribute to the rural roots of the music while introducing a sophisticated lyricism and energy. The trio has performed in such esteemed venues as the Getty Museum, Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, New York Symphony Space and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts along with performances for the John F. Kennedy Center to Yerevan’s Komitas Chamber Music Ensemble, and in several new arrangements by Yerevan-based composer Artur Akhalyan — who is known for his wide-ranging career as a chamber musician, solo and orchestral player, and is artistic director of Perspectives Ensemble, which she founded at 930 University Avenue. She has served as principal flute for American Modern Ensemble and Catapult Opera; was a 12-year member of Quintet of the Americas; guest artist with groups including the Ibarra Winds, American Ballet Theatre, Oratorio Society of New York, American Symphony Orchestra, and Orquesta Sinfónica do Estado São Paulo, Brazil, with whom she recorded Villa-Lobos’s Bachianas. She is a member of the Si Newhouse Foundation, and many generations of our dear friends Hester Diamond, Roberta Gerhard, Benet Caslabasance, Charles Tomlinson Griffes - An American Original and Music of the Mountains—Aaron Copland’s Appalachian Spring and the Traditional Music that Inspired It.

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The Cathedral of St. John the Divine is the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. It is charted as a house of prayer for all people and a unifying center of intellectual light and leadership. This concert is supported by the Jarvis and Constance Doctorow Family Foundation in commemoration of the life of Danielle Doctorow. The Ensemble also honors the memories of our dear friends Hester Diamond, Winifred J Harris, and Si Newhouse. Additional support is provided by the Hagopan Foundation, the Si Newhouse Foundation, and many generous individual supporters.

Perspectives Ensemble

Perspectives Ensemble has presented thematic concerts as well as programs on subjects that bridge the visual, musical, and literary arts, con-
TCA Brings ‘Charles’ and Chansons to New York


The Los Angeles-based performers, featuring singer Maurice Soudjian, pianist/actor Bernard C. Bayer, singer/actress Mariette Soudjian, accordion/guitarist Harout Soghomonian and upright bassist Levon Ghanimian, were enthusiastic to showcase the production, written and directed by Taleen Babayan, for the East Coast Armenian community, following two performances in Hollywood last fall. “Taleen created a beautiful homage to the legendary artist, Charles Aznavour, and being able to portray him is a dream come true,” said Bayer, a member of the Screen Actors Guild who has collaborated with Academy Award-winning film composers on the piano. “Performing in New York City to a sold out show is a testament to the enduring passion and love that audiences of all ages have for Aznavour, whose boundless talent, humor, passion and perseverance make him such an inspiration.”

The bio-musical combined a narrative of Aznavour’s key life moments, from living in Occupied France during World War II, the son of Armenian Genocide survivors, to his creative spats with Edith Piaf, to the challenges he faced while trying to make a name for himself in show business. The biographical scenes were enriched by live musical performances of Aznavour’s signature songs, including La Bohème, Moiun D’Aimer and La Mamma, as well as Franco-English versions of Huir Encore, Yesterday When I Was Young and Emmanence/Not/Take Me Away, performed as a duet by Maurice Soudjian and his daughter, Mariette, who also sang Aznavour’s English hit She and Edith Piaf’s memorable La Vie En Rose.

“Performing in the Big Apple, where Aznavour in Beirut.”

Reprinted from A Harvest of Recipes Cookbook, published by the Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno, California.

Recipe

Bulgur Coleslaw
by Christine Vartanian Datian

INGREDIENTS:
1 1/2 cup medium bulgur
1 cup water
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
1/3 cup plain yogurt, to taste
3 tablespoons cider vinegar
2 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoon coarse ground mustard
1 teaspoon celery seeds
1/2 teaspoon dill weed
4-5 thinly sliced green onions
1 tablespoon lemon juice
3-4 cups finely shredded cabbage, green, red, savoy or Napa can be used
1/2 cup each thinly sliced celery and shredded carrots
Salt and course black pepper
Chopped fresh parsley, fresh or dried mint as garnish

PREPARATION:
Combine the bulgur, water, and salt in a pan, and bring to a boil. Stir, cover, reduce heat, and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until all liquid is absorbed.

In a medium bowl, combine the mayonnaise, yogurt, cider vinegar, honey, mustard, celery seeds, dill weed, green onions, and lemon juice. Blend dressing into the hot cooked bulgur. Cover and chill, preferably overnight.

To serve, combine the bulgur mixture with cabbage, celery and carrots, and toss. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with fresh parsley or fresh or dried mint.

Serves 46.

Without boundaries.

Recipe Corner

“My wife, daughters and I loved the show so much we couldn’t stop talking about it on the drive home,” said attendee Mark Dabbagh. “Thank you for inspiring us and for taking me back to a time when I listened to Charles Aznavour in Beirut.”

“Although I missed the premiere of Charles in Los Angeles, I patiently waited for a show in New York and it was truly a memorable evening,” said Vivian Hovsepian. “The narrative about Aznavour’s biography, the music, singing and multimedia showcasing the legendary artist was brought to life with such innovative talent, hard work and love.”
MARCH 27 — Dr. Melihet Polatel will give a talk titled “Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Books” at USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research, Friday, 8 p.m. Western District of the Armenian Church, 335 Concord Ave., Belmont. Sponsored by Friends of the Armenian School of Los Angeles, Nor Serout Armenian Cultural Association and the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, under the auspices of Armenian Primate, Western Diocese of the Armenian Church.

APRIL 4 — Boston Court Passadena presents a concert reception following the screening of Daybreak by the true stories of her Armenian ancestors, and featuring the original Off-Broadway cast. Saturday, April 4, 4-9:30 p.m. Tickets are free to subscribers, with Armenian refreshments included in the price of the ticket. Boston Court Pasadena, 21 N. Mentor Ave., Pasadena. More information can be found at https://bostocourtpassadenacalifornia.org/events/daybreak/; or call the box office at 626-683-6801, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Tues. - Fri.


MARCH 25 —  Sergeant-Instructor Scott Jabajian invites you to an evening of laughter. Back by popular demand, world renowned comedian and pianist Kev Orkian returns. Get ready for a fun-filled night of laughter. Kev’s entertaining the audience with his brand new show “SUPARMENIAN”! To be performed throughout the Greater Boston area. Admission is free.

MARCH 29 — Music of Violinist Leon Chilingirian and Pianist Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian. 2 p.m. The Sanctuary at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Everyone is welcome to attend! This concert is a gift to the community. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For further information contact the Holy Trinity Church office at 617.354.0632 or office@htaac.org.

APRIL 2 — Film Screening: “Vahé Oshagan: Between Acts,” followed by discussion with filmmaker Hayriye Oshagan. 3 p.m. Museum of Art and Design, 110 South St., Watertown. Sponsored by the Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston, Inc. to aid all Armenian schools in Turkey. For info or donations, call Krikor Shaboian at 617-687-1881. For tickets and information, contact the Holy Trinity Church office at 617.489-0346 or email prsoiab@gmail.com

MARCH 29 — Sunday, Music of Violinist Levon Chilingirian and Pianist Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian. The Sanctuary at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Everyone is welcome to attend! This concert is a gift to the community. HOLY TRINITY ARMSN EN OF GREA T BO STON, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For further information contact the Holy Trinity Church office at 617.354.0632 or office@htaac.org.

APRIL 17 — Book Launch: MAYDA, the first Armenian feminist book. English translation of this 1883 classic just released by the Armenian International Women’s Association, NY Chapter, in collaboration with Arts Ablaze Studio, Frank Younan, and James Vlach. Call 617-354-0632 or visit mayda.org for more information.

MARCH 27 — Panel: “Adventures With/In the Architecture, Tufts University.

MARCH 22 — “Village of Women” Film Screening, 7:30 p.m., Co-sponsored by the Armenia Tree Project and NAASR/Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

MARCH 18 — Panel. “Green Revolution: Armenia’s Vision to Fight Global Climate Change,” at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Co-sponsored by the Armenia Tree Project and NAASR/Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

MARCH 22 — “Village of Women” Film Screening, 7:30 p.m., Co-sponsored by the Armenia Tree Project and NAASR/Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

MARCH 29 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture „Treblinka“ at Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday beginning at 7:00 am. Coffee, hosted by Starbucks & Conversation from 9:00 am - 10:00 am. The annual reconfiguration is support- ed by the Park’s Charles and Doreen Bleszynski Endowed Fund. The project is supported, in addition, by private donations and our generous gift-in-kind of artists_Aurelian and Arshad Mardiros and their family. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

MARCH 30 — tomato Cultural Association of Greater Boston presents an Easter Desert Demonstration featuring chef Nathanial Karianian. Friday, 7:55 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Doors open at 6 p.m., demon- stration 7:59 p.m., with a newly renovated Balkar Lower Main Hall. Advance tickets are $20. Balkar community will attend walks through making deserts. Chocolates, bonbons, medlants and gata will be available for sale. For questions and refreshments, contact the Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington. Details to follow.

APRIL 4 — Museum Day, 12:00-6 p.m. at the Armenian Museum of America. The Armenian Museum is proud to be part of Smithsonian magazine’s Museum Day. Day tickets will be free for the institutions that country provide free entry to anyone presenting a Museum Day ticket. The Museum Day ticket provide free admission for two people on Saturday, for free. Tickets visit: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/museum- day/asp/98731653/7469512399/americas.html

APRIL 4 — “The Power of Love” Fundraiser and Art Show, featuring photographer Zaven Khachiyan, Armenian soprano and pianist Artak Mansurian, Armenian soprano and pianist Arin Adamyan as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Details to follow.

MARCH 26 — Sunday, Music of Violinist Levon Chilingirian and Pianist Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian. The Sanctuary at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Everyone is welcome to attend! This concert is a gift to the community. HOLY TRINITY ARMSN EN OF GREA T BO STON, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For further information contact the Holy Trinity Church office at 617.354.0632 or office@htaac.org.

MAY 2 — Celebrate Public Art two-part program during ARTWEEK BOSTON. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Saturday at 1:00pm. WORLD LABOR DAY BLOOD DRIVE at Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway from 10am to 3pm. ARMSN EN OF GREAT ER BOSTON will host a Blood Drive for workers people in cities and towns in 35 countries worldwide in peace and harmony and support Armenia. Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, USA and Ukraine followed by RECEPTION TO VIEW THE 2020 RECONFIGURATION OF THE ABSTRACT SCULPTURE, hosted by Eastern Lambezian Nakachts and MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org.

May 9 — Spring Dinner/Dance featuring Barayt Goryan of Istanbul, Saturday 7:30 p.m., St. James Armenian Church, Watertown. Sponsored by the Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston, Inc. to all Armenian schools in Istanbul. For info or donations, call Krikor Shaboian at 617-687-1881.

MAY 17 — “Two by Two.” A staged reading of two mem-orable plays by Barbara Bejoian, with five actors. Presented by the Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston, Inc. to all Armenian schools in Istanbul. For info or donations, call Krikor Shaboian at 617-687-1881.

MAY 28 — Friends of the Armenian Society (FACS) presents the 69th annual Armenian Night at the Pops, featuring the young and talented violinist Diana Adanyan as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Symphony Hall, Boston. B. P. For tickets and information, please visit FACSBoston.org.

MAY 30 — Holy Trinity’s 2nd Annual Battle of the Bands, 7 p.m., Charles and Newat Talician Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Admission is free. Come hear three bands and vote for your favorite. Drink, music and some friendly competition. Contact the Holy Trinity Church Office at 617.489-0346 or office@htaac.org for more information or to book tickets.

JUNE 17 – Tea & Tranquility, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 6-10 p.m. Call 617.354.0632 or email office@htaac.org for more information or to book tickets.

JUNE 25 — Under A Strawberry Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 8:30pm. Evening to meet & greet, tie on a ribbon on the Wishing Tree. Enjoy a moonlit labyrinth walk, luscious refreshing ice teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org.

OCTOBER 10 — Salute to Armenian Radio of Boston celebrates its 40th anniversary at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center. Watertown 7:30 p.m. Details to follow.
Katarina Kacunovic: Through my Granny I Feel My Armenian Roots

KATRINA, from page 12

somebody called me to sing in their punk band, and after that I auditioned to sing solo at a local music school, and I was accepted. I fell in love with opera. During my days at the music school, my brother Rastko (who is nine year my senior) was having problems with his lungs due to frequent bronchitis, so the doctors suggested that he took up a sport to strengthen his lungs and body. I took him for an audition at my music school. He was accepted and fitted four years of playing the trumpet, after which he studied drums at the per- cussion department. He went to Berklee College of Music in Boston afterwards where he was granted scholarship. Today he lives in London and works as a musician.

As for me, I chose to jazz music pro- dominantly, as well as its derivative forms. You mainly sing in English, also in Serbian. Have you ever thought about singing in Armenian?

Certainly, only I don’t know the language at all. Although I remember hearing my grand- mother and my great-grandmother speaking Armenian (mostly when they were talking something secretive). I’ve never learned it. The only thing I remember are parts of a song for something secretive). I’ve never learned it. The mother and my great-grandmother speaking Armenian?

What is interesting is that both my father, and my husband, who are Serbian, are so pro-Armenian. Sometimes they worked as even more passionate advocates for Armenians. My husband Boudar was recently on a business trip in St. Petersburg, and was sitting at a business dinner at a huge table with people from all over the world, but he saw a couple with char- acteristic faces, so he went over and asked the astonished people if they were Armenians. Of course, they all laughed at the camera. He could conclude that being an Armenian only by being married to one for so long.

How are your relations with the Armenian community in Serbia?

When the Baku pogrom happened in 1918, the intellectuals of Serbia, and the Armenians living there founded the Serbian-Armenian Friendship Society, and my mother became the secretary. The society existed for several years during the political situation of connecting these two countries on a national, cul- tural and political basis. Then came the years in which we had war in the former Yugoslavia, which resulted with the NATO bombardment of Serbia in 1999, so naturally, the society dis- solved due to the events.

I don’t know the Armenians that came to Serbia in the past 10 to 15 years. I know some of them, but I haven’t had the opportunity to take part more in the community events, and programs.

My second daughter Sara is studying to become a film director. My latest video, Satellite, as done by her and my Angélica.

I have never had blind ambitions for my chil- dren, never thought they had to achieve some- thing because of me. I will support every sanc- tion they make in the future, and try my best to support them as much as in my power. That is what I have learned from my parents.
Azerbaijani Raid and Its Broader Political Implications

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenians and Azeris have been trading cross-border attacks and sniper fire since the beginning of the Karabakh conflict in 1988. President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan has made no secret of favoring a no-war, no-peace policy in the region to wear out Armenia, depopulate the country and pave the way for a takeover, not only of Karabakh but also Armenia. Since an unofficial meeting between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Aliyev in Astana in October 2018, cross-border shootings had noticeably decreased. However, a sudden burst of violence on the border on March 6 in the Ghazakh region, leaving one Azeri soldier dead and one Armenian soldier wounded, does not indicate a routine exchange of fire but rather a signal of a broader political development in the region. In particular, four days later, in another attack, one Armenian soldier died.

Portraying military developments in the region, the West’s stance on Armenia has tilted towards Armenia. Georgians have been growing weary recently with the increasing provision of fresh military hardware to Azerbaijan and the protection of Azerbaijan against Armenia. The Erdogan delegation’s sudden visit to Baku in February and the provision of fresh military hardware to Azerbaijan was a warning to Moscow over Armenia’s head.

Another development in the region which coincided with Erdogan’s trip was the visit of Georgia’s Minister of Defense to Baku, with a large delegation, and on the other hand, planned his reprisals very carefully. He simultaneously took a trip to Baku, with a large delegation, and on the other hand, appealed to the West, and in particular, to NATO. The West’s cool response to Erdogan’s plea opened the floodgates of military grants in Europe, breaking a 2016 agreement with the European Union in which Turkey agreed to give a home to refugees fleeing Syria.

Recent reports from the European Union indicate that Europe is caving in to Erdogan’s bullying, promising more funds to Turkey, after a meek complaint that this is not the proper way to extract funds from the West.

The Erdogan delegation’s sudden visit to Baku in February and the provision of fresh military hardware to Azerbaijan was a warning to Moscow over Armenia’s head. Another development in the region which coincided with Erdogan’s trip was the visit of Georgia’s Minister of Defense to Armenia to consider some deals in their common defense. The Georgians have been growing weary recently with the increasing Turkish and Azeri influence in their country, and have finally tilted towards Armenia.

All the above developments were the ramifications of the major standoff between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Erdogan. The latter’s arrogance had met the intransigence of Putin who had been expected in Istanbul on March 5 to resolve the carnage in Idlib. Flexing his power, Putin refused to budge and forced Erdogan to visit Moscow with a top-level delegation, including the Ministers of foreign affairs, defense and economics.

After six hours of intense debate, during which time Putin and Erdogan avoided eye contact, they basically agreed to disagree. In fact, they only made some cosmetic changes to the Sochi agreement of October 2019. Russia insisted on continuing to fight groups which were labeled as terrorists by the United Nations. Turkey reserved the right to retaliate if its forces came under attack. A ceasefire was agreed upon, with the establishment of a 14-mile corridor under Russian and Turkish control.

The losing side in this agreement was Syria, whose forces have been making headway in Idlib. President Bashar al-Assad of Syria has vowed to capture Idlib and move to the east to get rid of the mercenaries there on Turkish payroll.

The ceasefire, the tenuous agreement, the plans and determination of all the parties concerned have turned the region into a powder keg, ever further away from any prospect of peace. The Russian-Turkish confrontation was continuing for a long time, with its potential fallout in the Caucasus. However, throughout those developments, politicians, the news and media in Armenia were almost deaf to the situation. The removal of seven judges from the benches of the Constitutional Court, the circus of insulting former presidents, no matter how much they deserved them, had become alienating issues of life and death. Only the detonation of bombs in Ghazakh finally got through to the public that the region was heading toward a major unrest. The media, the pundits and news outlets have begun to focus on those global issues. Armenia finally realized that Karabakh was on the global map to be used by Turkey as Russia’s pressure point.

Although Pashinyan carefully calibrates his foreign policy, the media is enjoying an orgy of Russia bashing.

It is hard to guess how many politicians realize the outcome of that anti-Russian rhetoric.

In those tense moments, Armenians expect to find friends in the global news media and one of the columnists who normally plays fair has been Thomas de Waal, who this time has come up with a disappointing statement. In an article titled “Time for an Armenia-Azerbaijan History Ceasefire,” he has created parity between the Sumgait pogroms and the Khojali deaths.

The first one was an organized carnage against unarmed civilians, resulting in the expulsion of 35,000 from Azerbaijan; the latter was the sad result of war casualties.

In a typical Western condescending tone, treating all people outside the west as barbarians, he questions the veracity of the historic facts presented by both sides, rather than doing due diligence to accurate facts from fiction.

A war is raging in Syria, the fallout from which is reaching Armenia.

A war of words with equal intensity has taken over the news media. The euphoria after the Velvet Revolution should not lead Armenia to complacency. Our external problems are more pressing than the internal.

The media and the politicians would be doing a disservice to the public if they fail to make a distinction at this time and draw history’s lesson from fiction.
Every March during Women's History Month, I long to see images of the Armenian women who fought for the freedom of their homeland. Too many times Armenian history is mainly the stories of the men. But without women there is no Armenian nation and defensively the war in Artsakh could not have been won without the women. I go to many marches in New York City carrying my Artsakh War Veteran sign with a map of Artsakh and a photo of some Artsakh women soldiers because I wanted Americans to find out about Artsakh Freedom Struggle and see some of the women involved in it.

I feel I have some Armenian warrior women ancestors, but I don't know who they are because my family history was lost due to the 1915 Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Turks. I also wondered about the many stories of Armenian women fighting back during the Genocide that we would never know about. I felt sad I had not had an Armenian education, so in 2017 I looked through most of the Turkish Archives in the Pilekçian Library searching for any information on women resistors. Even though I couldn't understand most of the writing, when I saw a photo of a woman Urfa freedom fighter I copied it and put on a Tshirt. Later when I saw a textbook with a drawing of Armentik, a woman who helped defend Adn in 1126, I made a painting of her.

I joined the Artsakh Liberation Struggle in 1992 after seeing so many Azeri attacks and so many mutilated Armenian bodies. I went to many battles and was very excited to meet many inspirational women soldiers like Margarite Sarkissian, a sniper and Siranoush Tahinos, an older woman who said "I don't want to knit socks, give me a gun." I wrote her an anonymous letter and she replied sending me her photo and her herstory. I wrote an article about her in the Armenian Mirror Spectator. I also met Monte Melkonian. She has depicted the Armenian struggle for freedom in poetry, painting, photography and Hollywood films. I long to learn about some Armenian women on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdhZpg7irlI) and in other social media to share with the public our belief that it will be possible to end wars if we support peace in our region and in the world, inspired by its key role in the global community.

In each of these struggles, the spirit of mobilization revealed by our nurses constitutes a unique example of the national spirit that his whole world. As non-governmental organizations, we fully support the steps of our state, which are based on the country's security and interests, and that also protect the establishment and maintenance of peace in our region.

We argue that this struggle to dry terrorism at its source should be continued with the same determination. We know that the question of Armenia's presence in Syria means to ignore our border security. Various countries' approaches in favor of terrorist groups and in support of regional instability has shown that we often fight the same wars.

However, our nation, which has a foresight, has always been and will continue to be with its state. As non-governments, we support the steps of our state to protect the peace and security of our country and we support every step taken. No one should doubt that we will overcome all difficulties in unity and solidarity, as it has been until today.

"Turkey is a country of peace. Turkey is the key to peace in the region and the world."

Despite all the obstacles and attacks on our way, we would like to announce to the world that we are ready to support our state and army, and struggle with them when necessary, in order to defend our national security, prevent new humanitarian crises and establish peace in our region.

Armenian leaders are once again shouting to the world that we will protect this homeland, under all circumstances, and struggle with the integration of the state, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder.

However, not all Turkish citizens support their government's invasion of Syria. Cumhuriyet newspaper wrote a revealing article accusing President Erdogan of pressuring the minorities.

Toma Chelik, a member of the Turkish Parliament representing the Turkish minority in France, wrote a letter to the Vice President of Turkey, asking the following questions:

- Who prepared the text of the President's letter to the minorities?
- To what other groups was this letter sent?
- Who decided to send the letter to the minorities?
- Why did the President publish this letter?

Armenian leaders are once again shouting to the world that we will protect this homeland, under all circumstances, and struggle with the integration of the state, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder.
Ruins of Ani Puts History in Perspective

ANI, from page 1

Incidentally, the book received the 2019 Sona Aronian Book Prize for Excellence in Armenian Studies from NAASR.

Marc Mamigonian, the director of academic affairs at NAASR, in his opening comments said that it is “important to make [Ani’s history] accessible to the outside world,” and that the book was “enriching it with a currency we will hear tonight.”

Arkun, the executive director of the Teykenian Cultural Association of US and Canada, and assistant editor of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, a historian by training, started off the program by giving an overview of the grandeur of Ani and the infighting and pettiness that led to its eventual demise.

Arkun said it was important to encourage scholarship in Armenian topics and delved into the significance of Ani.

“All has a special place among Armenians in that it is a symbol of Armenian culture. It is an almost mythical land of 1,001 churches,” he said.

Ani is tantalizingly close to the Republic of Armenia and yet out of reach. It occupied about 200 acres on the Shirak plain in the Armenian Highland.

Ani was the Armenian Bagratuni capital from 961 to 1045 AD. After the Arab invasion of Armenia, Armenians eventually fought to regain independence and took advantage of weakening Arab rule, though it did lasted 150 years.

The city, at its height, was estimated to have a population of 100,000, which was larger than many European capitals in that period. The Byantine Empire gradually moved eastward until it took over Van and Vanarpakan. It was able to trick King Gagik II, who was the last king of Ani, to go to Constantinople, where he was forced to renounce his throne.

While Ani lost its independence to the Byzantine Empire, it still functioned as a center of trade on the Silk Road.

The city was eventually deserted by the early 18th century, after being sacked multiple times, sold and abandoned.

From the 1890s to 1917, Prof. Nicholas (Nikolaï) Marr, the Russian archeologist, and his students, including Hovsep Orbeli, excavated Ani’s ruins. In part, thanks to their efforts, Ani was declared a UNESCO world heritage site in 1981.

In the 19th century, Ani regained a cache among world travelers as well as Armenians, who regarded the ruins interesting for different reasons. For many Europeans, the ruins were exotic and harkened back to a mysterious history for Armenians, the half-collapsed churches and defensive walls recalled a mighty and advanced heritage.

Catholicoi of All Armenians Mattoos II Immifian had gone to St. Petersburg to meet with the Tsar and requested permission to visit Ani during his voyage from St. Petersburg to Echmiadzin.

At the time of the visit of Vartabed Balakian with the entourage of Catholicos Mattiess II in 1909, the area was under Russian rule, as Turkey had recently lost the Russo-Turkish war in 1876.

Arkun showed some photos taken by the entourage then and current photos of Ani, as clearly some of the ruins have been deliberately destroyed further and recent signs obscuring the Armenian origin of the local architecture.

Arkun gave a detailed presentation of the city as it had been, perched between two rivers, with a fortress defending it.

In fact, the pictures were so impressive that several in the audience gasped.

“There were several major cathedrals, includ-
ing one by the architect Drtad, who later on went to Constantinople (Istanbul) to repair Hagia Sophia Cathedral.”

“It was very refined for this period of time,” Arkun said, and could possibly have influenced the medieval architecture of Europe.

He added, “Ani had become an urban center for trade, as it was on the Silk Road.”

The task awaiting Arkun and Peter Balakian was to dig down the text of the manuscript of Bishop Balakian, who had written with the purpose of pulling at the heartstrings of Armenian readers rather than provide a disinterested narrative.

The visit had taken place shortly after the Adana massacres of 1909, the authors said. The Armenian community was uneasy in the aftermath, but very fragmented in their views.

The young vartabed hoped that his book would encourage unity among them if they were able to reflect on their glorious heritage.

Balakian in his comments connected his ancestor’s visit with his own almost a century later. He also compared some of the photos from the same sites, which had deteriorated tremendously not only because of natural causes but because it was clear that the government had tried to destroy some of the buildings.

He said according to the manuscript of his uncle, the latter had been overjoyed to see Ani. He quoted the bishop from the book’s introduction, “I was overjoyed at this opportunity to see Ani. I had a thirst to see those eternal monuments of the past glory of our forefathers. I wanted to kiss that holy soil.”

He thought about it as “Armenia’s Florence.”

Balakian also noted that for Raphael Lemkin, the Jewish-Polish attorney who created the term genocide, the destruction of the culture was a part of genocide.

He noted that it was ironic that the approximately 30,000 Armenians who remain in Turkey today are cut off from Armenian sites in Turkey. While the ruins of the city at across the border from Armenia, crossing that border is not easy.

Tying it to the current problems in Turkey, Balakian said that Osman Kavala, the Turkish businessman and philanthropist, who has been jailed for several years on a variety of unsubstantiated charges, was one of the people who in 2010 met at the United Nations with the Turkish Cultural Representative, along with Balakian, Prof. Christina Maranci, Prof. Rachel Gosharian.

A reception follows the lecture. The Ruins of Ani is available on Amazon.

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