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Ruins of Ani Puts History in Perspective

BELMONT, Mass. — Prof. Peter Balakian and Aram Arkun, 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

On Thursday, February 27, the two discussed their new book at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research to a packed audience.

see ANI, page 20



Peter Balakian (Photos by Jirair 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 south-western section of the border.

According to the Defense Ministry, an Azerbaijani “sabotage” unit attacked 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 province bordering the Gazakh district in western Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan’s State Border Guard Service, whose troops protect that 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, Artsrun 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 reported on March 9 that Azerbaijani 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 Makhstudyan told Public Radio of Armenia.

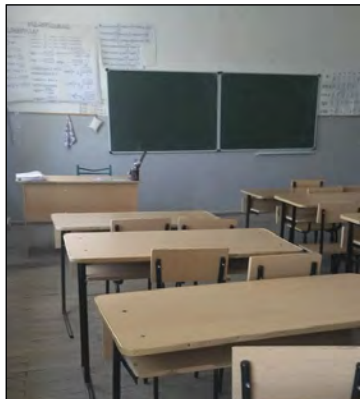
Firing in the direction of the village started at about 3 pm on March 8. Several houses and a vehicle were damaged.

(See related 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 Tekeyan 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 that links Armenia to Artsakh. Its school 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



The math classroom before renovations

The same classroom at the Berdzor Tekeyan School after renovation

Life in Armenia Seems Back to Normal As Government Advocates End to Travel

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 refrain from visiting Italy “given the measures being taken by the Italian authorities aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19.”

Authorities in Yerevan 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 9,000 people and left 463 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 March 17-18.

Armenia reported its first and as yet only coronavirus case on March 1. A 29-year-old see VIRUS, page 4

NEWS IN BRIEF

Karabakh Still Freer Than Azerbaijan, Says US Watchdog Group

NEW YORK (RFE/RL) — Nagorno-Karabakh remains a “partly free” 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 US human rights group also said that the 2018 “Velvet 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 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 100-point scale.

“There was an increase in competition and civil 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 “partly 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.”

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.

“Do the law really have 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.

INSIDE

Armenia’s State Symphony Rises

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Archaeologists Have Discovered Children's Skeletons at Artanish Excavation Site

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Human remains were unearthed in June 2019 at Artanish archaeological site and are kept at the storage site of the Armenian “Service for the protection of historical environment and cultural museum-reservations” organization, the group reported on March 9.

The excavations were conducted jointly with RA NAS Archaeology and Ethnography and Geological 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 partly recovered, three of which belonged to children.

The excavation group plans to resume work in Artanish 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 on returning to Armenia for permanent residency by being inspired with the non-violent, velvet, 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 a meeting on March 6.

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 (RFE/RL) — Jailed former President Robert Kocharyan was hospitalized late on Sunday, according to his lawyer. Hovannes Khudoyan said on Monday, March 9, that doctors at Erebuni medical center had assigned inpatient treatment to his client.

“Kocharyan will undergo some medical examinations and will probably need to stay in hospital for several days,” said the lawyer, without elaborating what medical problem the 65-year-old has.

A Kocharyan aide said he was taken to hospital with fluctuating blood pressure.

Kocharyan, who ruled Armenia in 1998-2008, currently stands trial on coup and corruption charges mostly stemming from the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan.

The last time he was remanded in prison was last June.

In October he underwent what medics described as a successful surgery at a Yerevan clinic.

Armenian Parliament Approves Asset Seizures

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia's parliament passed in the first reading on Thursday, March 5, a government bill allowing authorities to confiscate private properties and other assets deemed to have been acquired illegally.

Under the package of legal amendments drafted by the Armenian government late last year, prosecutors will be able to investigate individuals in case of having “sufficient grounds to suspect” that the market value of their assets exceeds their “legal incomes” by more than 25 million drams (\$52,400).

Should the prosecutors find such discrepancies they can ask courts to nationalize those assets even if their owners are not found guilty of 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 Badasyan 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,” Badasyan told lawmakers.

The minister thus sought to allay fears that many well-to-do Armenians will now risk losing their properties. He specifically ruled out the confiscation of assets acquired with 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 Party (LHK).

Still, LHK leader Edmon Marukyan voiced some misgivings about the effectiveness of the measure. He said that corrupt officials who registered their wealth in their relatives' names may well be let 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.

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

Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan openly objected to the bill at the time, however. Speaking at a cabinet meeting, the former banker said he is worried that it could scare away 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, including 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 at most. According to the latest projections from the United Nations Population Fund, that number is expected to decline further, to about 2.8 million, by 2050.

Former President 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, after taking over the next year, one-upped Sargsyan by promising to boost the population to 5 million by 2050.

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 the age of fertility, to identify health problems and to prevent and cure infertility,” Torosyan said during a government meeting on March 5. Secondly, newly married couples will be provided medical check-ups “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 promoting fertility,” he said.

Public reaction to the proposal so far has been relatively quiet, but the apparent focus on women as the source of infertility did not sit well with some.

One Facebook user, commenting 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 change your tone.”

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

Another commenter asked, “what about couples who 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.

(This article originally appeared on March 9.)

New Recipients of Vartan Gregorian Scholarship Announced

YEREVAN — Asya Darbinyan with a research project Armenian Refugees of the War and Genocide and Russian Imperial Humanitarianism and a team of scholars led by Knar Khachatryan with their project Urbanization and Socioeconomic Development in Armenia: A Throwback to More Than One Century, were named the new recipients of the Vartan Gregorian Scholarship (Research Grants) Program.

“This is the second phase of the scholarship program, and I would like to note that we have had very interesting research projects submitted. In ac-



Asya Darbinyan and Knar Khachatryan

demic research, it's all about quality, not quantity: this is the motto we rely on while selecting the best two proposals. Year after year, a growing number of Vartan Gregorian scholarship recipients will help create of new community of scholars involved in the Armenian studies, and this is very good news for all of us,” said Hayk Demoyan, Vartan Gregorian Scholarship Selection Board Member.

Asya Darbinyan, one of the two recipients of the Scholarship Program, is a postdoctoral fellow for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Stockton University. With the support of the scholarship, she will complete her study of Armenian refugees of the Great War and the Armenian Genocide exposing the role of Russian Imperial Humanitarianism during that period.

“This scholarship will provide me with a special opportunity to bring to a successful completion the research and analysis of the extensive, yet understudied, sources on this important aspect of Armenian history and the history of humanitarianism. Considering the financial difficulties emerging scholars have to face, it will be a huge support for my project and for the continuous research in the field of Armenian stud-

ies,” says Asya Darbinyan.

The group of young scholars, Aleksandr Grigoryan, Anna Ohanyan, Ara Sanjian led by Knar Khachatryan, Associate Professor at American University of Armenia, is the other participant of this year's Vartan Gregorian Scholarship. Their socioeconomic approach will produce a unique systematic study of urbanization and economic history of Armenia.

“We will explore the long-term effects of historic events on urbanization and its impact on the country's economic and social development. Our research will focus on providing evidence of the disproportional regional development of the Armenian economy over the period of 1900-2015. This scholarship will give us an opportunity to undertake a quality scholarly research on a high priority area for the Armenian economic and social development,” noticed Knar Khachatryan.

Aurora announced the Vartan Gregorian Scholarship (Research Grants) Program in the fall of 2018 to support early-career scholars and researchers studying unexplored questions of the 20th century history of Armenia. The annual scholarship program awards up to \$30,000 in grants to Armenian researchers under the age of 40 from Armenia and abroad. A total of 29 applications from Armenia, Russia, Georgia, Japan, France, Germany, USA and Canada were submitted for the current phase of the Scholarship Program.

All applications are reviewed and evaluated by the Selection Board comprised of prominent scholars: George Bournoutian, Senior Professor of History, Iona College; Hayk Demoyan, Doctor of Historical Sciences; Hasmik Khalapyan, Lecturer, American University of Armenia; Ronald G. Suny, William H. Sewell Jr. Distinguished University Professor of History, the University of Michigan, and Emeritus Professor of Political Science and History, the University of Chicago; Hratch Tchilingirian, Associate Faculty Member of Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford.

Berdzor (Artsakh) Classroom Renovations through Tekeyan

TCA, from page 1
dilapidated windows and doors. During the past three years, TCA initiated renovations, and 15 classrooms have already been repaired. In 1994, the school only had 24 students, and now has over 200.



The renovation of two more classrooms are being completed at present thanks to the donations of Ardemis Chapjian, whose adopted classroom will be named after Robert Khatchig Chapjian, and the Mikhjian family and friends, who raised money in honor of Zaghig Komediassian.
Funds have just been raised for the renovation of a third classroom through donations in lieu of flowers in honor of the recently deceased Alice Mavian. This classroom will bear a plaque in her name and that of her husband Zorek Peter Mavian (see the accompanying article).
Although the TCA Sponsor a Teacher pro-

gram has been helping the school for a long time, the TCA school renovation program began only a few years ago in 2017, when TCA Central Board Canadian member Arto Manoukian wanted to renovate a classroom. The renovation, like all others, was supervised by TCA's representative in Armenia Gayane Muradyan, and it only took some ten days.
The inauguration took place in October of that year, and Varoujan Sirapian, director of the Tchobanian Institute of Paris 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 Avedis and Arshalouys Djihanian of Montreal, Hratch and Viviane Simonian of Egypt, and the Basmadjians of Toronto. The Montreal Tekeyan chapter, the Kavaldjians 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 Berdzor 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 continued 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 inexistent and badly needed. Modern plumbing and bathrooms can be created through a US \$12,000 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.



Outhouse awaiting sponsor for renovations at the Berdzor Tekeyan School

The donor will be updated on the renovation progress and funds will only be disbursed with the advancement of the project. The plaque text

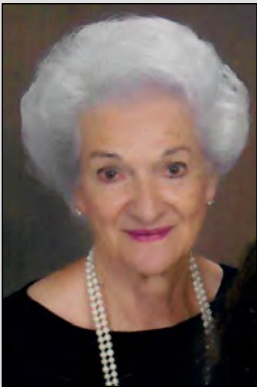


Plaque for the room renovated by Mrs. Ardemis Chapjian and named in honor of Robert Khatchig Chapjian

will also be validated with the donor.
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 Berdzor 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 Berdzor 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 during peace talks.
For more information on helping Berdzor, email Arto Manoukian at manoukb@yahoo.com or

contact TCA headquarters (tel. 617 924-4455, address 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472).

Mavian Donations for Tekeyan Berdzor School Renovations



DETROIT — Alice (Karagosian) Mavian (1923-2020) was a vivacious woman with high energy and cheer for all.
Born in Manhattan, she grew up in Pontiac, Mich., where she married Zorek Peter Mavian, and had two daughters eventually, Diana (Alexanian) and Cheryl (Jouboulion). The Mavian couple traveled the world and enjoyed life together. Alice asked that donations upon her death be sent to the Tekeyan Cultural Association for the renovation of a classroom at the Tekeyan Berdzor School in Karabakh (Artsakh). As her daughter exclaimed, "She loved her Armenian culture and was proud of her heritage."

As a consequence, a total of \$4,780 was raised in lieu of flowers after she passed away, and the funds will be used to renovate a classroom in her name and that of her spouse. The friends and family of Alice Mavian have set an inspiring example and hopefully others will follow.
The contributors to the Mavian classroom are the following, in alphabetical order:
George and Debra Alexanian, Hagop and Diana Alexanian, Mike and Denise Alexanian, Jeannot Andonian, Elizabeth Aprahamian, Lucy Ardash, Mike and Maral Arzoumanian, Adrine Avant, Jason and Narineh Avant, Edmond and Nora Azadian, Carole Basmadjian, George and Hilly Bedross, Jim and Nancy Berryman, George and Denise Boyagian, Shant and Sarah Boyatzian, Ernie and Louise Brocher, Janine Brycz, Greg and Christina Courtney, Steve and Deborah Dakhlian, Gregory Darakjian, Detroit Armenian Women's Club (DAWC), Anahid Donikian, Ara and Diane Ekizian, Sirop and Alice Ghazourian, Dr. Charles G. Godoshian, Hratch and Anita Gogoshian, Susan K. Gopigian, Marian Iafrate, Dr. John and Kim Jouboulion, Tim and Robin Karagosian, Robert Karagosian, Edward and Yvonne Korkoian, Hovsep and Karine Koundakjian, Steve and Doris Krikorian, Christine Maisano, Zaven and Susan Mangassarian, Diane Mavian, George and Vart Mikhjian, Sarkis and Lisa Mikhjian, Eugene and Robin Newman, Sandra and Alice Nigoghosian, Richard Norsigian, Fr. Abraham and Shakeh Ohanesian, Osep and Nadya Sarafian, Linda Sharigian, Emma Sogian, Joan K. Swain, Sally and Zoe D. Tarpinian, David Terzibashian, Vergin Tousounian, Greg and Joanne Todd, Gary and Virginia Vartanian, Marilyn and Larry Wilchynski, Anjel Yessayan.



Donate to Renovate the Tekeyan Berdzor School

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Telephone _____

Amount of donation

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500

☐ One dedicated classroom \$4000 ☐ Other \$ _____

Donation receipts will be issued for donations of \$50 and more

Donation to be made out to the Tekeyan Cultural Association with memo: renovation of Tekeyan Berdzor School

Mail checks with this coupon to

Tekeyan Cultural Association
755 Mount Auburn Street
Watertown, MA 02472

Credit cards also accepted: Card number _____

Expiration date _____ Security code _____ Billing zipcode _____

Or call in the card number at (617) 924-4420 x103



INTERNATIONAL

International News

French Armenians Raise Alarm about Mayoral Candidate

PARIS (Armenpress) — Rachida Dati, nominated as a candidate for Paris Mayor, has close links with Azerbaijani authorities, Co-chairs of the Coordination Council of Armenian organizations of France Murad Papazian and Ara Toranyan, editor-in-chief of *Nouvelles d'Arménie*, and member of Ile-de-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 Azeri Laundromat investigation into the European Parliament.

Dati's friendship with the ruling regime was 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 Being 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 Kishle 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 the doctor worked.

"What happened to us was probably the worst scenario," Constantinos Ioannou, health minister of the divided island's internationally-recognized government, 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.

Pashinyan Holds Top-Level Meetings in Brussels

BRUSSELS — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan arrived in Brussels on a working visit on March 9. The head of the Armenian government first 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 expressed readiness to further develop the EU-Armenia cooperation, including trade and economic relations. The President of the European Council hailed the Armenian Government's ambitious reform agenda and went on to assure that the European Union will continue to actively cooperate and assist our country with the implementation of democratic transformations, including judicial and legal reforms.

Pashinyan and Charles Michel exchanged views on their expectations from the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit, due to be held in Brussels this June.

Pashinyan stressed that his government will be consistent in developing and strengthening democracy in Armenia, protecting human rights and enforcing the rule of law.

Pashinyan also met with European People's Party (EPP) President Donald Tusk at the EPP headquarters in Brussels.

Welcoming the Armenian Premier, Donald Tusk said: "Mr. Prime Minister, I am pleased to welcome you in my new position but with a feeling of traditional friendship. I mean traditional friendship not only with you, but also with Armenia. You can rely on me in my new position."

Donald Tusk stressed that the Europeans, including society and politicians, have high confidence in Armenia's new government and personally in the Prime Minister, which is an important political capital.

Thankful for the warm welcome, Nikol Pashinyan said: "We highly appreciate your role in the development of EU-Armenia relations. We are convinced that as EPP President you will contribute to the further development and progress of our cooperation."

The parties exchanged views on a broad range of issues relating to cooperation between Armenia and the European Union. They highlighted the need for close cooperation between Armenian parliamen-

upcoming constitutional referendum. The interlocutors exchanged views on the ongoing fight against corruption in our country.

The EPP President hailed the



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and European People's Party (EPP) President Donald Tusk

tarians 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.

Life in Armenia Seems Back to Normal as Government Advocates End to Travel

VIRUS, from page 1

citizen of Armenia who had been evacuated from coronavirus-hit Iran along with scores of others had tested positive and was hospitalized. Thirty-one other citizens who may have had close contact with the infected person had also been placed under a two-week quarantine in a disused hotel in Armenia's resort town of Tsaghkadzor.

No new coronavirus cases have been reported in Armenia since then as the country tightened control at its border with Iran and re-introduced entry visas for Iranian citizens.

Armenia's universities and schools resumed classes on March 9 one week after being closed by the government.

Health Minister Arsen Torosyan said on Friday that all 31 persons placed under quarantine on March 1 continue to "feel well" and show no respiratory disease symptoms.

They were isolated at a hotel in the resort town of Tsaghkadzor because of being in physical contact with a 29-year-old Armenian man who tested positive for the virus after returning from Iran last week. Earlier this week, Armenian authorities tightened controls at the partly closed Armenian-Iranian border.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting in Yerevan last week, Education Minister Arayik Harutyunyan said there is no reason to extend the one-week closure of the universities, schools and kindergartens.

The first coronavirus case also led to the last-minute cancellation by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of a March 1 demonstration which was due to mark the 12th anniversary of the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan. Even so, the Armenian authorities did not ban or restrict other public events in the country.

In another sign of their confidence that Armenia is not at risk of a major coronavirus outbreak, Pashinyan announced on Friday that he will start campaigning next week for a "Yes" vote in the April 5 referendum on constitutional changes drafted by his administration. He said he will visit all Armenian cities and towns and hold rallies there.

At least one death in Iran is that of an Armenian. An 85-year-old Iranian-Armenian woman died from coronavirus in Tehran, Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan said this week.

According to Arevik newspaper the victim, Elsik Masih, was hospitalized at a Tehran hospital a week ago.

(Stories from Azatutyun and Armenpress were used to compile this report.)

Community News

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 Dimitar 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



Fr. Krikor Zakaryan

Derderian, 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 (CEC), Camp Committee and Camp Board, serving the youth on a Diocesan level.

Fr. Krikor Zakaryan is married to Anoush Yazadzhiyan from Bulgaria and they have two daughters, Emma and Grace.



Fr. Krikor Zakaryan and his family



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 discoloration known as port-wine stain.

By Alvin Powell

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 have serious complications, including blindness when they occur near the eye, cognitive issues if in the brain, or bleeding and functional difficulties in affected body parts, particularly the hand and foot. But, she added, the most common — and often 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. Rox 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.

see LASERS, page 9

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

By Andy Nguyen

GLENDALE (*News Press*) — A Glendale man was sentenced to 37 months in federal prison on Tuesday, March 3, after pleading guilty last May to using the stolen identities of several dentists to defraud banks out of \$2.1 million.

In addition to his incarceration, 39-year-old Ararat Yesayan was ordered by a judge to pay just over \$2 million in restitution.

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 dental 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, 49-year-old Varoos 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 Artin Sarkissians, also of Glendale, has charges pending against him.

Nayiri Nahabedian Reelected to Glendale Unified Board of Education

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

She is the daughter of Khatchig and Ani Nahabedian. Khatchig Nahabedian is a member of the Tekeyan 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.



Nayiri Nahabedian



COMMUNITY NEWS

My Hajimom

A Survivor in the New World

By Ruth Bedevian

My paternal 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 at the time of her birth (circa early 1840s).

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, Soghme and son-in-law Shahpaz Shahbazian were temporarily living in a boarding house in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The manifest states that her destination was 110 Buffalo Avenue, Paterson, NJ. It was the residence of the Najimian family where her brothers had settled. She was born Najimian; her married surname was Bakalian, but she was entered into the US records as Najimian.

Like so many survivors, she neither spoke of nor obsessively lingered on the horrors she suffered when she was violently widowed. Two Turkish soldiers had entered her home and slaughtered her husband and two sons before her eyes during the Hamidian Massacres (1894-1896) in the southeastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Chaos prevailed in the household and the surviving spouses and children scattered for refuge.

Thus, our family history is buried with the victims and therefore begins with Hajimom in the New World and with her new life with



Hajimom

which she was graced by Providence.

A Legacy of Love

I cannot remember feeling the warmth of her embrace nor the soft kisses upon my forehead since I was very young. Nevertheless, I have felt the blessings of her goodness and love all the days of my life.

My earliest memories are stories of Hajimom told to me on the long Sunday afternoon drives when my parents, Karnig and Alice, would delight my brother and me with their narrations. More stories overflowed from uncles, aunts and older cousins to the point of my perfect enthrallment of her "sainthood."

Her moniker derived from being a haji (pilgrim) as evidenced by the blue tattoo that she bore upon her right arm and from being the surrogate mom. The affectionate designation disclosed a natural blend of the Old World from which she came and the New World to which she acclimated. To everyone in the family, she was endearingly addressed as Hajimom.

Soghme labored in the textile factories to supplement the nickels and dimes that Shahpaz brought home from haircuts and shaves. Industrious, Khoren (who assumed the surname Shahbazian from his step-father) started an elastic braid manufacturing business. Soghme invested her meager savings with her oldest son and left the textile factories to work in Khoren's small mill in hopes for him to succeed. Hajimom's firstborn grandson was destined to become successful and in later years his benevolence was bountiful, purchasing and renovating an old theater and donating it to the Holy Cross Armenian Church in Union City, NJ where a bronze plaque still adorns the wall with his image and name.

With Soghme's absence from the day to day duties in the household, Hajimom's responsibilities grew to become the stay-at-home surrogate mother. She tenderly and lovingly nurtured her three younger grandsons to adulthood. Soghme bore three sons to Shahpaz – Lud (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 Cliffside Park, NJ when she married my father in 1930. In the first year of the Great Depression, the house was already occupied by Soghme, 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."

Karnig liked to brag, "She rolled her own cigarettes. Smoking never hurt Hajimom. She lived to be 100."

Uncle Lud, who was famous for his humor, told his story. "Booboo Dye-ee, Hajimom's bachelor brother, came to visit for a week. When evening came Hajimom attempted to help him unpack. She was dumbfounded. There were no socks, no underwear, no clothes! The suitcase was packed full with bottles of homemade arak!"

Aunt Joey recalls with a smile, "We all loved Hajimom. I did many foolish things, but she



Hajimom and the author at 8 months of age

never yelled at me. She simply said, "Jaheel eh. Jaheel eh. Ge medzna." (She's immature, immature. She'll grow up.)

Cousin Janet admired her wisdom, "When Shahpaz would throw himself into a violent rage, she would say, "Okoud choonee." (It's no use!) "She possessed good sense to overcome the Baron's tirades."

Cousin Margaret 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." The bumpy mattress mystery was solved when it was revealed that Hajimom had hidden bottles of arak from Shahpaz to impose a curb upon his drinking.

Alice remembers, "Hajimom saw that a large water rat had crept into the upstairs quarters of the house and was roaming from room to room. She said nothing because I was pregnant and

she did not want to excite me for fear that I might miscarry the baby."

Alice continued, "Karnig 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."

"My eyes fell upon something black under the radiator in the bedroom as I was undressing. Thinking that Karnig had dropped a sock, I went closer to pick it up."

Suddenly the "sock" stretched to its full length, wiggled, then darted passed Alice, brushing his furry body against her ankles in its flight.

"Karney, there's a rat. A big, black rat!" Alice's piercing screams propelled Karnig from the living room where he had been reading the newspaper. "Aww, you're nuts. You just saw King Kong!"

see HAJIMOM, page 7



Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater Boston Presents

An Easter Dessert Demonstration

featuring Chef Nathan Kibarian





Friday, April 3rd, 2020

Doors open 6 PM, Demo 7-9 PM

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Light Refreshments will be served

For any questions, please contact Sossy Yoourtian (617) 281-1647



COMMUNITY NEWS

My Hajimom: Survivor in the New World

HAJIMOM, from page 6

“Shhh. Irav. Irav.” Hajimom whispered, “Sheedag eh.” (It is true, it is true. She is right.)

Hajimom interjected, “Baron and I have been trying to find it these past few days.” Alice recalls, “Then Karney believed me. Everything his grandmother said, he believed.”

Karnig chased the rat, finally plunging after it into the living room chair. He and Shahpaz chased the rat and got rid of it.

When the excitement was over, Hajimom confided to Alice, “One night the rat woke me up. You know, I am not used to someone in my bed!”

Food from the Heart

The kitchen was Hajimom’s domain and she reigned as queen. Alice, whose Roupenian clan hailed from Kharpet, learned to cook the Dikranagerdtsi style foods by watching her. Hajimom’s “Dzedzodz” is a Shahbazian family tradition and Thanksgiving Day is not complete without a steaming tray of it set upon the table. It is a mixture of wheat and seasoned meat, a recipe that I have not been able to find in a dozen Armenian cookbooks! It must be particularly Dikranagerdtsi or truly Hajimom’s specialty.

Alice was also learning how to bake from her neighbor. They struck up a friendship and Mrs. Jeffreys would call up to Alice, “Come on down. I’m baking a cake.” Alice would experiment with recipes. One day she taught Hajimom to bake an American-style cake. Curious to experiment and learn, Hajimom mixed two eggs with milk, sugar, and flour in a bowl and poured the batter into an enamel pan. The edges curled and burned. Her hands trembled from old age and she did not see well, but she baked the cake

and everyone ate it.

Karnig was also fond of telling the story of how Hajimom would bake the shak-ar-ee-shees (butter cookies) and hide them by locking them in the bottom drawer of the dresser. Karnig would pull out the drawer above and eat them. 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 Dikranagerdtsi when Lud would ask him. Vasken translated this prayer for his daughters, Joannie and Mary in 1985, one year before his death:

“I lay my head down on the pillow. My soul I give to the angel. Angel, you keep me well, so the Devil will not fool me. Saints Michael and Raphael, give me the strength so I can go into Heaven and work for the Lord.”

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.) “I look out the window and watch the children play and I am happy 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.” Karnig assured his beloved grandmother, “Hajimom, this is your home. You are no trouble for Alice.”

Hajimom thoughtfully nodded her head and



Hajimom with her grandsons and Shahpaz Shahbazian

made her final decision, “Yavroom, Nantz eh gemenam.” (My child, in that case, I stay.)

Grandmother and grandson had a special understanding and Karnig would listen and respond to his grandmother before all others. Their trust in each other was indestructible and tender.

No one can recall seeing Hajimom angry. Alice remembers the nearest she came to showing disapproval was about two years after Hajimom’s nephew’s wife, Lucia, had passed away. “Tookman brought a red-headed woman to visit us one evening. They were laughing and drinking in the living room. Hajimom quietly smoked her cigarette and when they left, she muttered softly, ‘Inch hede’ perav!’ (What did he bring?)”

“Living with Hajimom was a charming time in my life,” Alice recalls. She remembered the

day Hajimom died, “She passed like the flickering flame of a candle, so gently during her afternoon nap.”

How Karnig loved Hajimom. Alice vividly remembered Karnig sobbing when Hajimom was being laid to rest “The world will never be the same,” he grieved. He carried a snapshot of her in his wallet for the rest of his life. The night of his death, the nurse in the hospital emergency room emptied his pockets and handed the contents to Alice. There was Hajimom’s snapshot among his personal belongings. He was one month short of his 77th birthday. I believe his grandmother’s spirit was present to greet him on the threshold of his new journey and to comfort and assure those he was leaving behind.

Lud, Vasken and Karnig were blessed with being reared by their grandmother. She was their greatest legacy for they were graced in their formative years with a soul who was gifted with the fruits of the spirit – love, peace, joy, patience, gentleness, goodness and faith. The good works they rendered in their own lives were sown from this peaceful, modest soul who knew neither reading, nor writing – simply love for her family, common sense to deal with reality, understanding of the young, kindness and respect for others, and tolerance towards the ugly-mannered.

Over 125 years have passed since the Hamidian Massacres violently and brutally erased the trace of my family history. It is, however, ultimately the noble and righteous good that always remains. My Hajimom fills my heart.

(Ruth Bedevian 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.)



Tekeyan Cultural Association

Upon the Initiative of the
Tekeyan Cultural Association

And Participation of
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Keynote speaker



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Center Junior Postdoctoral Research Fellowship
USC Shoah Foundation Center for
Advanced Genocide Research
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Western Diocese of the Armenian Church
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Former US Attorney to Speak about Crime At St. James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting

WATERTOWN – On Monday, April 6, the St. James Armenian Church’s Men’s Club will host a dinner meeting at the church’s Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center in Watertown. The guest speaker will be Christopher F. Bator, a former US attorney from Cambridge.

Bator’s topic will be “Violent Crime in the Greater Boston Area.” A question-and-answer session will follow.

A retired US attorney from Cambridge, Bator now serves on the faculty of the Trial Advocacy Workshop at Harvard Law School. He also currently serves as a Board Member and Treasurer of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority and vice chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Alma del Mar Charter School in New Bedford.

Bator prosecuted violent drug, and organized crime cases as an Assistant US Attorney in Boston for more than 27 years.

He obtained his bachelor’s degree from Harvard College in 1976, and his J.D. from Boston University Law School in 1985. He was an associate at Hale and Dorr (now Wilmer Hale) in Boston. He was an assistant to Boston



Christopher F. Bator

Mayor Kevin H. White.

This St. James Men’s Club dinner meeting will begin with a social hour and mezza at 6:15 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m.. Mezza and Losh Kebab & Khayma Dinner \$17/person. Ladies are invited.

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

NEW YORK – Dr. David E. Gutman, associate professor of history at Manhattanville College, will present his recently published book, *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885-1915* (Edinburgh 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.

The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885-1915 tells the story of Armenian migration to North America in the late Ottoman period, and Istanbul’s efforts to prevent it. It shows how, just as in the present, migrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were forced to travel through clandestine smuggling networks, frustrating the enforce-

ment of the ban on migration. Further, migrants who attempted to return home from sojourns in North America risked debarment at the border and deportation, while the return of migrants who had naturalized as US citizens generated friction between the United States and Ottoman governments.

Gutman sheds light on the relationship between the imperial state and its Armenian populations in the decades leading up to the Armenian Genocide. He also places the Ottoman Empire squarely in the middle of global debates on migration, border control, and restriction in this period, adding to our understanding of the global historical origins of contemporary immigration politics and other issues of relevance today in the Middle East region, such as borders and frontiers, migrants and refugees and ethno-religious minorities.

For more information contact Prof. Khatchig Mouradian at km3253@columbia.edu.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Multicultural Mosaic Foundation of Colorado Votes to Recognize the Armenian Genocide

AURORA, Col. – 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 schol-

ars 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 rec-

ommendation 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 Kayane Ghazarian 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, roaming her beloved Upper Manhattan with cousins and friends, exploring

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 her 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 (Richard) of Bethesda, MD. She is also survived by cousins, again as precious to her as siblings: Vasken (Karen) Minassian of Bradenton, FL; John (Joanne) Pehlivanian of Bay Head, NJ; and Christine (Dr. Robert) Shamsey, 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: Colby 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, Jeanette and Amanda, who helped her maintain a wonderful quality of life for many years.



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

Hardy John Margosian Jr.

WATERTOWN – Hardy John Margosian Jr., of Watertown, formerly of Belmont, died on February 22, as a result of complications of pneumonia.

He was the son of the late Hardy John Sr. and Alice (Gedigian) Margosian of Lexington and brother of Zabelle Margosian of Somerville.

A graduate of Belmont High School, Class of 1962, and Bowdoin College, and a veteran of the US Navy, he enjoyed a wide range of interests and activities.

An accomplished dancer, he studied folk dance in Russia, taught dance at the Buckingham Browne & Nichols School, and performed with the Daron Dance Ensemble in Watertown.

He was a soloist with the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter dance group in the 1980s. The group sent him to Armenia to study dance, and in turn, to teach American dance to people there.

He also enjoyed traveling, skiing, and hiking in national parks.

He 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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COMMUNITY NEWS

Garibyan Brings Power of Lasers to Her Native Land

LASERS, from page 5

Hovik 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 220 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 Gyumri, 160 miles from Yerevan, is about 90 percent through the treatment for port-wine stain on her face. She said the laser procedures can be painful, but not intolerably so, and her parents said the results have been worth it.

"As my child was growing, she was feeling unconfident and ashamed. We decided to apply for laser treatment," said A. Aloyan, Mary's father. "We haven't finished treatment yet, but the results are obvious, and we plan to continue the interventions until my daughter will have a port-wine-stain-free face. My child is

more confident and does not concentrate on the port-wine stain on her face. We are happy."

Aloyan said he'd definitely recommend the treatment for others, as it improves the quality of life for patients and their families.

"As a parent, it's hard when your daughter goes through all of this, but the results are encouraging," Aloyan said.

GARIBYAN HOPES HER DISCOVERY WILL REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR OPIOIDS TO TREAT PAIN

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 the 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 Ganem, 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 MD from HMS in 2009. After her residency in dermatology, Garibyan encountered a high school friend, Ray Jalian, who was working as a fellow with Anderson at MGH's Wellman 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 team invented and developed in the lab. They intend to use this for removing disease-causing fat tissue in the body and for treating pain. This coolant is able 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 performed laser surgery for the same vascular problems as in the Armenia program. Garibyan met an Armenian plastic surgeon who was visiting Boston University and who'd spent some time at Anderson's lab. After seeing their work, he urged them to bring their expertise with laser surgery for vascular abnormalities to Armenia.

"Rox said, 'OK, let's go,'" Garibyan said. "I was like, 'What? I have to ask my boss.' He said, 'I am your boss.' So I said, 'Yes, we should go.'"

That first trip, in 2013, coincided with a plastic surgery conference in the capital, and included Garibyan, Anderson, and Jalian. 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 the work there.

Avakoff and Poochigian are of Armenian ancestry and were struck on their travels by the number of people with visible vascular abnormalities 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 couldn't 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 predecessor 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 what they need," Garibyan said.

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



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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,



ATP’s Operations Manager Arthur Harutyunyan inspects pine trees planted in the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest together with Anthony Davis and Omri Bonneh.

professor of political science and international studies at Stonehill College, and Papelian. They will be joined by Guy Hydrick, a geographic information system () 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.

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 tradi-

tional 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 Armenian float from last year

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COMMUNITY NEWS

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



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Arts & Living

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

BELMONT, Mass. – The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and Dadian-Oztemel 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 Batmasian Hall on the third floor of the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave. A reception will follow the program in the Shahinian 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 inscription 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 white-washed 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 mono-graphs 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).

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 “Ara Malikian: A Life among Strings” at the National Park Visitor Center. The film follows the personal journey of this expressive Armenian violinist with Lebanese roots, and showcases his impressive career in both classical and contemporary music against the backdrop of his latest international tour.

The Salem Film Fest, now in its 13th year, is the largest showcase of international documentary films in New England, offering more than 60 films, plus forums, parties and more. The festival runs from March 20-29 at locations in Salem, Beverly and Peabody (<https://salem-filmfest.com>).

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 screening venues along with CinemaSalem which is a minute’s walk. Several restaurants and bars surround the 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 <https://salemfilmfest.com/2020/movies/ara-malikian-a-life-among-strings/>



Sergey Smbatyan conducts the orchestra during rehearsals.

The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra Aims To Conquer the World

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 be a part of 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 educational 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 expended on his love of music.

continued in next page

Katarina Kacunkovic

‘Through my Granny I Feel My Armenian Roots’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

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 Rasic Rasa, and judge Mirjana Rasic (maiden name Miljkovic) of Serbian-Armenian origin. Her maternal grandmother was Pergrui, the daughter of Tateos Kandikian and Peruz Amerikian, originally from Keghi (near Erzurum), and Constantinople. Although Katarina received classical music education, her solo debut was in 1991 with the Belgrade Radio and Television Jazz Orchestra. During her 30-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.

She has published several albums: “Belgrade Jazz Stage 93” (1993), “Erect Woman” (2006), “New Life” (2009), “Tribute to Mirko Souc” (2011), “Ten Endless Stories” (2019), Christmas Cards (2019), performing jazz, blues, soul, and pop songs. She has also made recordings for the Belgrade Radio archive...



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 for 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, Rastko Rasic, 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 will 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



ARTS & LIVING

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 14 years ago by 18-year-old students of Yerevan State Conservatory. We acknowledged that our job was studying well at the conservatory and mastering our profession 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



Sergey Smbatyan

has an awesome healing power to uplift your spirit. That's what helps to take over the fatigue 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 like-minded 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 hundred musicians and a conductor creates a spectacular harmony that eventually 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 immensely happy to see such projects around in the future and will contribute to such initiatives with whatever it takes to help them strive, as others once assisted us.

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 acknowledgement 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 understands music. We visit schools to have discussions 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 continue and grow all the more impactful over time.

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

Our main goal is to perform our best, even better than we did before. I would say that we try to reach the maximum both technically and 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, especially at outstanding venues all over the world, how do you manage to deal with anxiety and nerves? Is there a particular approach to it?

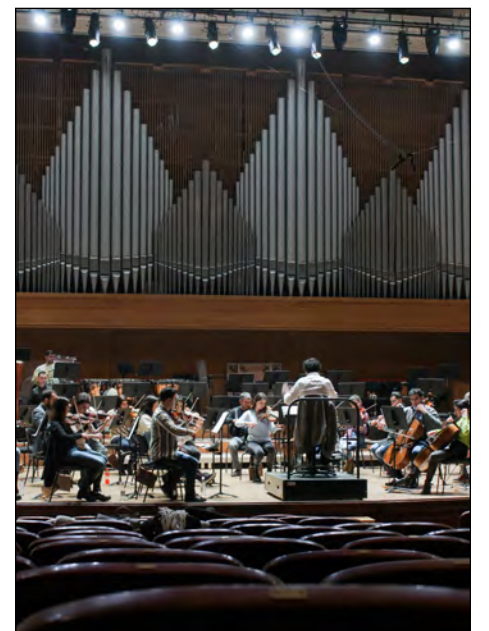
Practice, practice and practice! There is no better cure for that than performing multiple times and getting the right feeling of the stage.

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 ways, and sincerely 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 so young at the time and everything impressed and touched our emotions with overflowing every single one of



Sergey Smbatyan conducts the orchestra during rehearsals.

I must admit that it was a very special feeling, since we managed to ignite a spark of interest in the public eye during our first tour. Everyone was stunned and curious about our performances, that was also because of our young age. However, if we compare SYOA with other youth orchestras, they change the members once in a while and do not keep the same musicians for a long period of time. Despite that fact, our orchestra's members did not change and we had a permanent place in it.

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 continue 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 astonish 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 in. Their story being an

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 youth courage was what earned us the success of our endeavor. The past 14 years were a unique and fulfilling journey of arduous work, fabulous world stages, warm reception from audiences and continued enrichment of our repertoire.

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

I was 4 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 grandma, 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 extremely hard to step in with a new say in the immense musical world and this already "over-packed" market. We needed to work hard in order to attract musicians. And we made it. We achieved it through hours of daily rehearsals and improvement which resulted in the well-recognized orchestra that we have today.

Do you think you have reached the goal set in the beginning?

Our goals transform over time. We achieve them step by step and keep heading for more challenges as we attain the targeted heights along our way. This is crucial for developing further. To name the goals we had originally set ourselves, I would highlight our first concert, our concert tours, cooperation with celebrated soloists, conductors and composers, performing on prominent stages, affection and sustainability of the audience, educational programs, promotion of the Armenian composing school in the world, advancement of Armenian performing art, etc.

Our goals expand in scale and scope year by year. Our highest vision is to position the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra among the world's most reputable orchestras owing to its authentic profile and performing style.

You were very young when you founded the orchestra and became the artistic director/conductor of it, was there any time at all when you wanted to give up?

Give up? Never! I have to say that a musician's life demands tremendous physical and spiritual exertion. There are times, when you are exhausted of the physical tension but music



The violin section

We had crossed the threshold of youth and the transformation of our profile was both logical and necessary.

Are there any future plans at all connected with the Armenian musical youth?

We pay great attention to the cultural upbringing of the youth. We have been implementing the "DasA" program in high schools, which aims to develop a connection with classical music among children from an early age.

us. During our most recent tour, we had the chance to perform in one of the top music halls in Austria, Vienna Musikverein. That experience was unreal. Every time there was a rest in music, I was looking around, trying to comprehend the happening, but it all seemed too good to be true. The whole magic of it left a big mark in our memories.

What did it feel like to be the first Armenian State Youth Orchestra?

inspiration for many young creators, will make them believe that hard work pays off especially when it is done with enormous love and passion. 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 established 15 years ago.

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 Tekerian, and Yeraz Markarian, and Perspectives Ensemble members, including flutist 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 *sharagans* (Armenian hymns), work songs and humorous songs, folk songs preserved by the great Armenian composer-musicologist Gomidas Vartabed in his own transcriptions as well as new arrangements, languidly beautiful melodies of 18th century troubadour/composer Sayat-Nova, music of Alan Hovhannes, and the beloved Lullaby from Aram Khachaturian’s ballet *Gayane*—one of several new arrangements by Yerevan-based

of *Ashes: The Life and Art of David Ohannessian*, her biography of her grandfather, who founded the art of Armenian Jerusalem ceramics in 1919 after surviving deportation from Ottoman Turkey during the WWI period of the Armenian Genocide. The book was longlisted for the PEN America Jacqueline Bograd Weld Biography Award and is a finalist for the Association of American Publishers’ PROSE Award in Biography & Autobiography.

Harpist Stacey Shames has appeared throughout the United States, Europe, Canada and the Far East. Recent concerto engagements include those with The Riverside Symphony at Lincoln Center, The Munich Chamber Orchestra, The New Jersey Symphony, The Saint Louis Symphony, and The National Chamber Orchestra. She won first prize in the American Harp Society National Competition, and a top prize in the International Harp Contest in Israel. Shames has held the solo chair with the Saint Louis Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, The Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, with whom she currently performs, tours, and records. She concertizes extensively with Aureole, her trio of flute, viola and harp, and the group has released ten recordings, championing new works written for the combination. Shames has performed on the soundtracks to over 100 films, and appears on-camera in many films, as well as on the

the beauty of Armenian folk music to stages ranging from Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center to Yerevan’s Komitas Chamber Music House. The trio’s original arrangements pay tribute to Armenia’s folk melodies, while introducing a sophisticated lyricism and new energy.

Ensemble.

Perspectives Ensemble

Perspectives Ensemble has presented thematic concerts as well as programs on subjects that bridge the visual, musical, and literary arts, con-



Perspectives Ensemble

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’s Symphony Space and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts along with performances for Cirque du Soleil, the Near East Foundation and the Silk Road Project. Visit zulal.org for music, videos, future performances, and more.

As a percussionist, drummer, and composer, John Hadfield’s dedication to music has taken him from his native Missouri to concert halls and clubs across the world. He has released two albums of his own compositions – “The Eye of Gordon” and “Displaced” – and composed for various ensembles, dance performers, as well as feature-length documentary *After Spring*, which was selected for the Tribeca Film Festival. His ability to cross genres has allowed him to appear with a broad range of artists such as Kinan Azmeh’s City Band, Nguyen Le’s STREAMS Quartet, the Saturday Night Live Band on NBC, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and the Silk Road Ensemble.

He has collaborated on more than 100 recordings as a guest artist, including the Grammy® award winner “Yo-Yo Ma and Friends,” “Songs of Joy and Peace” and the Grammy-nominated “Fun Home.” Most recently, he can be heard playing percussion on the movie soundtracks of “Joker” and “Gemini Man.” Hadfield’s work has received significant critical acclaim. *Time Out New York* noted, “John Hadfield’s percussion is so impeccable,” and in 2016, *Modern Drummer* stated, “Hadfield delivers a fluid groove, strong yet never intrusive, punctuated by adroitly chosen accents. His skillful sound-weaving choices create the illusion of a seamless multi-percussion section.” Hadfield currently serves on the Jazz faculty of New York University, where he teaches drum set and directs the World Percussion

sistently receiving the highest critical accolades, among them “Familiar Strangers: Gypsy Musical Heritage,” “The 19th & 20th Century Melodrama” (featuring the NY premiere of Aaron Kernis’ *Goblin Market*); “Homage to Catalonia: Music of Xavier Montsalvatge, Roberto Gerhard, Benet Casablanca,” “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,” “a superb recital by the Perspectives Ensemble,” and “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 Cathedral of St. John the Divine is the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. It is chartered 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 Danièle 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 Hegardt Foundation, the Si Newhouse Foundation, and many generous individual supporters.



The Zulal Trio

composer Artur Akshelyan.

Flutist Sato Moughalian maintains a widely varied career as a chamber musician, solo and orchestral player, and is artistic director of Perspectives Ensemble, which she founded in 1993 at Columbia University. She serves as principal flute for American Modern Ensemble and Catapult Opera; was a 12-year member of Quintet of the Americas; guest flutist with groups including the Imani Winds, American Ballet Theatre, Oratorio Society of NY, American Symphony Orchestra, and Orquestra Sinfonica do Estado São Paulo, Brazil, with whom she recorded Villa-Lobos’s *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 6* and other major works of the composer.

She has toured on five continents as a chamber musician, is an avid performer of new music, can be heard on more than 35 chamber music recordings, and was awarded the Catalan Ramon Llull Prize for Creative Arts in 2013. She has artistic directed 5 CDs with Perspectives Ensemble, most recently the critically-acclaimed Naxos recording, “Manuel de Falla: El Amor Brujo” (1915 version) and “El Retablo de Maese Pedro.”

In 2019, after a decade of research and writing, Stanford University Press published *Feast*

acclaimed series “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel.”

In Armenian, Zulal means “clear water.” Zulal, the a cappella performance and recording trio – composed of Teni Apelian, Yeraz Markarian and Anais Tekerian – has brought

johnavakian.com

Homage To Poet Diana Der Hovannessian
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ARTS & LIVING

TCA Brings 'Charles' and Chansons to New York

NEW YORK — The New York City presentation of the bio-musical “Charles,” based on the life and songs of legendary singer Charles Aznavour, debuted to a standing-room-only audience at Symphony Space, in an event hosted by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York. Special guests in attendance included United States Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Col. Tigran Hovhanisyan, military adviser of Armenia to the United Nations, and Zoya Stepanyan, second secretary of the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations.

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 enthusi-

astic 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



From left, Levon Ghanimian, Harout Soghomonian, Maurice Soudjian and Bernard C. Bayer (Photo Credit: Anahid Kaprielian)



From left, Vartan Ilanjian, Maurice Soudjian, Bernard C. Bayer, Barkev Kalayjian, Mariette Soudjian, Taleen Babayan, Hilda Hartounian, Harout Soghomonian, Shoghig Medzadourian and Levon Ghanimian (Photo Credit: Anahid Kaprielian)

Occupied France during World War II, the son of Armenian Genocide survivors, to his creative spark 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 Boheme*, *Mourir D’Aimer* and *La Mamma*, as well as Franco-English versions of *Hier Encore/Yesterday When I Was Young* and *Emmenez-Moi/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 has staged many of his memorable

shows, was very exciting,” said Mariette Soudjian, who has been featured on E! News and Comedy Central. “The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York was a wonderful host and as performers we were delighted the show was sold out so quickly.”

“We congratulate the performers for an amazing show,” said Hilda Hartounian, chair of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York, whose Executive Committee members included Shoghig Medzadourian, Vartan Ilanjian and Barkev Kalayjian. “The audience loved the performance and we are proud that the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York continues its commitment to preserve the Armenian culture in the Diaspora through unique productions such as this.”

The thought-provoking production unveiled many details about Aznavour’s climb to the top and set these moments into historical context while exploring his upbringing, artistic influences and his impact on Chansons as an integral presence in France’s Golden Age of Music. The show welcomed audience members of all ages and cultural backgrounds, following in the footsteps of Aznavour, who created music for all

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian

Bulgur Coleslaw

INGREDIENTS:

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 coarse 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 4-6.

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



Bernard C. Bayer with attendees after the show (Photo Credit: Dikran Hovhannian)

without boundaries.

“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.”



ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

CALIFORNIA

MARCH 27 — Dr. Mehmet Polatel will give a talk titled “Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Properties,” at USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research, Friday, 8 p.m. Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, 3325 N. Glenoaks Blvd, Burbank. Polatel, a Postdoctoral Fellow in Armenian Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, has been awarded the 2019-2020 Center Junior Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research. The program, initiated by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, is supported by AGBU Western District Committee, Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian Council of America, Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, Armenian Rights Council of America, Armenian Society of Los Angeles, Nor Serount Armenian Cultural Association and the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate, Western Diocese of the Armenian Church.

APRIL 4 — Boston Court Pasadena presents a concert reading of Joyce Van Dyke’s play Daybreak, inspired by the true stories of her Armenian ancestors, and featuring the original Off-Broadway cast. Saturday, April 4, at 4:00 p.m. Tickets \$10 (free to subscribers), with Armenian refreshments included in the price of the ticket. Boston Court Pasadena, 70 N. Mentor Ave., Pasadena. For tickets, visit <https://bostoncourtpasadena.org/events/daybreak/>, or call the box office at 626-683-6801, 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m, Tues. - Fri.

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 18 — Panel: “Green Revolution: Armenia’s Vision to Fight Global Climate Change,” at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont, MA. Panelists to be announced. 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, 6:00—7:30 p.m. at Studio Cinema, 376 Trapelo Road, Belmont. The Armenian Museum of America is proud to cosponsor the film Village of Women by Tamara Stepanyan featured in the Global Cinema Film Festival at Studio Cinema. This engaging and moving documentary tells the story of the small village of Lichk where for 9 months of the year, only women, children, and the elderly reside. The men go to Russia to work and return to their homes only during the winter. The village is held together by these strong and resourceful women. Director Tamara Stepanyan befriends these women, filming them at their strongest and most vulnerable periods, and gathers insight into the life of this village of women. Tickets can be purchased for \$12 at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/global-cinema-film-festival-of-boston-tickets-91132524835>

MARCH 25 — Christina Maranci, “New Discoveries at Ani Cathedral,” at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Co-sponsored by NAASR and the Arthur H. Dadian and Ara Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art and Architecture, Tufts University.

MARCH 27 — Panel: “Adventures With/In the Armenian Language,” including Nancy Kricorian, Dr. Kristi Rendahl, Dahlia Elsaid, and moderated by Dr. Lisa Gulesserian, at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. Friday, 7:30 p.m. Presented by Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society Eastern Region and NAASR through the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

MARCH 28 — Sayat Nova Dance Company 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 laughs as KEV entertains the audience with his brand new show “SUPARMENIAN”! To be held at Newton North High School Auditorium, 457 Walnut Street, Newton, at 7:30 pm. Tickets: \$60 (\$60 tickets include a pre-show meet & greet reception with KEV from 6-7pm). \$45 (General Admission). Tickets may be reserved: Online at itsmyseat.com/KevInBoston (online fees apply) Or by calling: Alina (617) 852-1816 or Shant (781) 879-8102 Flyer and seating chart available at <http://www.sayatnova.com/kevorkian.htm> All tickets are final sale.

MARCH 28 — “Songs of the Other,” In Tribute to Maestro Arsen Sayan. Daniela Tosic, voice • Sylvie

Zakarian, marimba • Nikola Radan, flute. Works by Komitas, A. Hovhanness, N. Grover, N. Radan, V. Srvandztiants. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington, Saturday, at 7 p.m. Open to the public. Admission free.

MARCH 29 — Sunday, Music of Violinist Levon 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. The duo will offer a rich and colorful program of works. Levon Chilingirian is Professor of Violin and Chamber Music Artist in Residence at the Royal Academy of Music (London) as well as Professor of Violin and Chamber Music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (London). Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian has performed extensively in her native Armenia and the former Soviet Union, as well as internationally. Her solo appearances and collaborations with various ensembles have won acclaim from renowned authorities in the musical world. Contact Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632 or office@htaac.org for more information.

MARCH 29 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture at the Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday beginning at 7:00 am. Coffee, hosted by Starbucks & Conversation from 8:30am -9:30am. The annual reconfiguration is supported by the Park’s Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund. A crane lifts and pulls apart the two halves of the split rhomboid dodecahedron, made of stainless steel and aluminum, to create a new sculptural shape. The annual reconfiguration is under the direction of A&A Industries, Inc., Peabody, who fabricated the Abstract Sculpture, the generous gift-in-kind of owners Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros and their family. Rain date: April 26 RSVP appreciated at hello@armenianheritagepark.org

APRIL 2 — Film Screening: “Vahé Oshagan: Between Acts,” followed by discussion with filmmaker Hrayr Eulmessekian, Taline Voskeritchian, and Dr. Karen Jallatyan. Thursday, 7:30 p.m. At the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. Co-sponsored by Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society and National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

APRIL 3 — Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater Boston presents an Easter Dessert Demonstration featuring Chef Nathan Kibarian. Friday, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Doors open at 6 p.m., demonstration 7-9 p.m., at the newly renovated Baikar Lower Floor Main Hall. Suggested Donation \$20. Kibarian will walk attendees through making desserts. Chocolates, bonbons, mediantes and gata will be available for sale. Light refreshments will be on sale.

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. Participating museums and cultural institutions across the country provide free entry to anyone presenting a Museum Day ticket. The Museum Day ticket provides free admission for two people on Saturday. For free tickets visit: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/museum-day/venues/museum/armenian-museum-of-america/>

APRIL 4 — “The Power of Love” Fundraiser and Art Show, featuring photographer Zaven Khachikyan, mezzo-soprano Victoria Avetisyan and pianist Anna Avetisyan at the Adele and Haig Der Manueelian Galleries on the third floor of the Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown, 7-10 p.m. Hosted by the Diaspora for Frontline Family Fund (DFFF) and the Knights and Daughters of Vartan (Ararat Lodge and Arpi Otyag). All proceeds go to children who lost fathers during April 2016 War. For more information, email info@kovcasp.org.

APRIL 6 — St. James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting - social hour and mezza at 6:15 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m., St. James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. Guest speaker Christopher F. Bator, US attorney from Cambridge. Topic will be “Violent Crime in the Greater Boston Area.” A retired US attorney, Bator now serves on the faculty of the Trial Advocacy Workshop at Harvard Law School. Mezza and a Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner \$17/person. Ladies invited. For additional information call the St. James Church office at 617-923-8860 or call Hapet Berberian at 781-367-6598.

APRIL 7 — Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide at Tufts University, with lecture by Rouben Shougarian. At Tufts University, Goddard

Chapel. Co-sponsored by the Darakjian Jafarian Chair in Armenian History, the History Department at Tufts University, Tufts University, the Armenian Club at Tufts University, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

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 Press. 7:30 p.m. @ NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. Co-sponsored by AIWA and NAASR. Details to follow.

APRIL 19 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston and the Erevan Chorale Society, founded by the Very Rev. Fr. Oshagan Minassian (1930-2008) and now under the direction of Composer Konstantin Petrossian, Music Director and Conductor, will present a Spring Concert on Sunday. 2 p.m. The public is warmly invited to attend this complimentary concert which 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 e-mail office@htaac.org.

APRIL 22 — Sato Moughalian: “Armenian Ceramics: How the Art of an Armenian Genocide Survivor Changed the Face of Jerusalem,” at Brandeis University, Rapaport Treasure Hall, Goldfarb Library. 415 South St, Waltham. Co-sponsored by the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies and National Association for Armenian Studies and Research NAASR.

MAY 2 — Celebrate Public Art two-part program during ARTWEEK BOSTON. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Saturday at 1:00pm. WORLD LABYRINTH DAY: WALK AS ONE, join people in cities and towns in 35 countries world-wide walking in peace and harmony including Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay and USA followed by RECEPTION TO VIEW THE 2020 RECONFIGURATION OF THE ABSTRACT SCULPTURE, hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers and MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

May 9 – Spring Dinner/Dance featuring Barteve Garyan of Istanbul, Saturday 7:30 p.m., St. James Armenian Church, Watertown. Sponsored by the Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston, Inc. to aid all Armenian schools in Istanbul. For info or donations, call Krikor Shaboian at 617 489-0346 or email prsoiab@gmail.com

MAY 17 — “Two by Five:” A staged reading of two memorable plays by Barbara Bejoian, with five actors. Presented by the Armenian International Women’s Association. 2 p.m., Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington. Details to follow.

MAY 28 — Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS) presents the 69th annual Armenian Night at the Pops, featuring the young and talented violinist Diana Adamyan as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Symphony Hall, Boston. 8 p.m. For tickets and information, please visit FACSBoston.org

MAY 30 — Holy Trinity’s 2nd Annual Battle of the Bands, 7 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. One of our favorite events! Come hear three bands and vote for your favorite. Dinner, music and some friendly competition. Contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632 or office@htaac.org for more information or to book tickets.

JUNE 17 — Tea & Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday from 4:30 pm - 6 p.m. Late afternoon to meet and greet, walk the labyrinth, enjoy refreshing ice teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports ,and desserts. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

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

OCTOBER 10 — Saturday, Armenian Independent Radio of Boston celebrates its 40th anniversary at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center. Watertown 7.30 p.m. Details to follow.

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ARTS & LIVING

Katarina Kacunkovic: ‘Through my Granny I Feel My Armenian Roots’

KATRINA, from page 12

somebody called me to sing in their punk band, and soon 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 junior) was having problems with his lungs due to frequent bronchitis, so the doctors suggested that he, if possible, should play trumpet, to strengthen his lungs and body. I took him for an audition at my music school. He was accepted and finished four years of playing the trumpet, after which he studied drums at the percussion 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 sing jazz music predominantly, 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 grandmother 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 children about the little sparrows...

How did your Armenian ancestors arrive in Serbia?

My great-grandfather Tateos Kandikyan was a pharmacist in Istanbul and started his business in the Turkish capital. He became very respectable and wealthy, so he and his wife Peruz lived in a villa on the Bosphorus. It was some years before 1900 when the Sultan gave him behest to move to a town named Tetovo (present day Macedonia), which was a province

of the Ottoman Empire at the time. They built a house with a pharmacy, which was one of two in the whole region. My grandmother Pergruhi (and seven more children) were born in that house, which still exists.

To what extent has the Armenian identity been preserved among these eight children?

To a great extent, I should say. First of all, the successors of my great-grandparents' sons (Noubar and Gabriel) still hold the surname Kandikyan (for instance, my cousin Tigran Kandikyan had a career as a soccer goalkeeper on the "Piunik" Yerevan soccer team). The feminine line is large, because my great-grandparents had four daughters beside my grandmother: Luiz, Anzhel, Vergine and Armenuhi. There was also a son called Harutiun, who died as a child.

All of us were raised in the loving memory of Armenian descent. The stories, similar to those of William Saroyan, were told about the humour, the kindness, the humane personalities that each member in the family held. Plus, the family is obsessed with pomegranates. That's so Armenian!

I know you have a song in English, Noubar and Gabriel, dedicated to your grandmother's two brothers. Mount Ararat is mentioned in it, too.

The first lyrics in English that I wrote was Noubar and Gabriel. I used their names to pay tribute to those two outstanding persons and true Armenians, to talk about something that Armenians, as a very old nation, as the first Christians and the nation that once held that part of the land, talk about and look upon with the great sadness – Mount Ararat. As well as with the pomegranate, mentioned in the Bible story about Adam and Eve (it wasn't an apple - the translation went wrong, so they used the

name of the fruit that looks seemingly the same), also the biblical mountain is something that this nation feels deeply connected with for the millennia because, Armenians are a rooted nation, have been on this part of the Earth for a long time.

Your Armenian grandmother's name was Pergruhi, which means "joyous girl" (or woman). Please tell us about her.

As I mentioned earlier, I grew up with her. Her persona left a deep, and significant mark in my heart, my soul, and on my thinking. She set standards in my ethic values, she taught me how to love and respect God, the creator of all things – Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. Through her I feel my Armenian roots. She died in 1976, but I miss her still.

I met people with one-quarter Armenian blood who told me their Armenian grandmothers have had an important role in shaping of their personality. What about you?

I have to say that my mother is pretty much Armenian, and very connected to her numerous Armenian cousins. They all look alike! But, what is interesting is that both my father, and my husband, who are Serbian, are so pro Armenian. Sometimes they used to be even more passionate advocates for Armenians. My husband Bozidar 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 characteristic faces, so he approached to them, and asked the astonished people if they were Armenians. Of course, they all laughed at the fact that he could recognize Armenians 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 1990, the intellectuals of Serbia, and the Armenians living here formed the Serbian-Arminian Friendship Society, and my mother became the secretary. The society existed for several years during which time it did a pretty nice job in connecting these two countries on a national, cultural 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 dissolved 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, and I hope that I will soon be able to take more part in the community events, and programs.

Your three daughters are also devoted to art.

My firstborn, Angelina, also has a significant career of her own, as the lead singer, and guitarist in the band named Random. (One of her musical inspirations, among others, was System of a Down, and Serj Tankian). She is also a photographer that does most of the shootings for me.

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

The youngest, Justina, is still in high school. She plays the drums, like her uncle. She is extremely musically talented, but she's still searching for her inspirations.

I have never had blind ambitions for my children, never thought they had to achieve something because of me. I will support every decision 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.

CALENDAR

from previous page

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 17 — HYE KEF 5 ANNUAL DANCE. Presented by the Armenian Friends of America, Inc. Featuring: Steve Vosbikian Jr., Mal Barsamian, John Berberian, Ara Dinkjian, & Jason Naroian. At the DoubleTree Hotel in Andover. For Complete Details, Visit ArmenianFriendsofAmerica.Org or Call Sharke' @ 978-808-0598.

MICHIGAN

MARCH 27 — Friday, 7 p.m., Edmond Azadian will be the featured speaker at "An Informal, Social Evening on Political Topics." AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School Library, 22001 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield, MI

NEW JERSEY

APRIL 18 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group presents a Spectacular Extravaganza Celebrating Historic Armenia (1590-1915). Featuring a runway show of traditional Armenian costumes from 40 historic cities by Julia Mutlu from Istanbul. Special presentation by the Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group. Saturday, Clinton Inn, 145 Dean Drive, Tenafly. 6.30 p.m. cocktail, 7.30 p.m., dinner. \$100 in advance, \$125 after March 15. Reservations, Marie Zokian (2010 745-8850 or Talar Sesetyan Sarafian (2010 240-8541).
APRIL 23- Armenian Genocide Commemoration featuring the acclaimed documentary "The Stateless Diplomat: Diana Apcar's Heroic Life." Thursday 7 p.m. Presented by producer Mimi Malayan. Sponsored by CHHANGE at Brookdale Community College, Student Life Center, Navesink Rooms (Parking Lot 7), 765 Newman Springs Road, Lincroft, NJ. Free Admission. 732-224-1889 or contact@chchange.org
SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2021 — Armenian Church Youth Organziation of America (ACYOA) 75th Alumni Anniversary Weekend in Northern NJ. More details to follow. Questions? Email: ACYOA75@gmail.com

NEW YORK

MARCH 27 — Atom Egoyan, films and direction Mary Kouyoumdjian, composition Laurie Olinder, projection artist JACK Quartet Silvana Quartet Unreleased scenes and highly personal short films by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Atom Egoyan ("The Sweet Hereafter") are given original new scores by Armenian American composer Mary Kouyoumdjian in this MetLiveArts commission. Egoyan's highly personal films and excerpts on the life of abstract painter Arshile Gorky are infused with themes of family and immigration. Kouyoumdjian's string quartets Bombs of Beirut and Silent Cranes explore her family's history with the Lebanese Civil War and Armenian Genocide through survivor testimonies and documentary. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 5th Avenue, New York. 7 p.m.

APRIL 26 — The Knights and Daughters of Vartan will host the Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square, New York. Sunday, 1.30 p.m. Free bus transportation for all students and scouts to and from Times Square. Sponsor Knights and Daughters of Vartan. Co-Sponsors: Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of America, ADL Ramgavars, Armenian National Council of America, Armenian Bar Association, Armenian Missionary Association of America and the Tekeyan Cultural Association. Participants: Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Church, Armenian Catholic Eparchy of US and Canada, AGBU-YPGNY, ACYOA, ASA, Armenian Network of Great New York, AYF Chapters of NY and NJ, Homenetmen Scouts, Armenian Schools, Youth and Professional organizations and the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization.

RHODE ISLAND

MARCH 25 — The Armenian Student Organization of Villanova University Hosts Book Presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian of her father's memoir Forced into Genocide, Wednesday, 7-9 p.m., Villanova University, 800 E Lancaster Ave Villanova, Falvey Library - Building # 18 - Room 205 (parking on West Campus

in the S4 / S5 lots) . Contact information: Kallie Stahl (610) 519-4458 / kallie.stahl@villanova.edu. Book sale/signing during reception (cash only). All proceeds donated to the Armenian Student Organization

MARCH 28 — The Women's Guild of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church in Wynnewood, presents its Sainly Women's Day Program with a special performance by Naomi Abajian of her one woman play "Because of my Son." Naomi, a professional actress from Chicago, plays the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in this highly renowned play. After the play, Naomi will discuss how she was inspired by her faith to write this play, and have a brief Q&A. The day begins with a short church service and readings of Sainly Women, followed by the play, and a delicious Lenten lunch. To be held at Sts. Sahag and Mesrob, 630 Clothier Road, Wynnewood, starting at 10:30 a.m. Reserve your tickets today! Tickets: \$25 Adults, \$10 Children (After 3/22/20, Adult tickets are \$30). Email Rosine Gouveia at rosinegouveia@gmail.com or call 610-724-8314. This program is open to everyone.

PENNSYLVANIA

MARCH 14 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Presents Its "Music Appreciation Series" Featuring Talented Performers Knarik Nerkararian, Soprano, Dalita Getzoyan, Flute, Nune Hakobyan, Piano, Gregory Ayriyan, Violin. Andrei Sobchenko, Saxophone. Book Presentation "Haykakan taraz - Armenian Costumes" By Artist Gourgen Manoukian. Saturday, at 7 p.m. Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence. Donation \$15 Refreshments.
MARCH 22 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church Presents "Meet The Doctors 2020 — Questions & Answers." We invite everyone to avail themselves of this opportunity and "Meet with our Armenian Doctors" Dr. Beverly Serabian, PhD, clinical psychologist Topic: Healthy Lifestyle Practices and Psychological Well Being Sunday, at 12:30 p.m. Hanoian Hall, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence.

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



COMMENTARY

Mirror Spectator

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COMMENTARY

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.

Although Armenia and Azerbaijan are not directly involved in the Syrian war, their respective associations with Russia and Turkey have led to fallout in the Caucasus.

When Turkey lost 32 soldiers in the Idlib conflict in Syria, with another 30 wounded, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan 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 immi-

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 had 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 all-encompassing 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



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 conclude 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 economy.

After six hours of intense debate, during which time Putin

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 in a disappointing statement. In an article titled "Time for an Armenia-Azerbaijan History Ceasefire," he has created parity between the Sumgait pogroms and the Khojaly deaths.

The first one was an organized carnage against unarmed civilians, resulting in the expulsion of 350,000 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 sort out fact 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 Armenia if they fail to make a distinction at this time and draw the wrong conclusion.



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkish President Orders Minority Leaders to Sign a Propaganda Letter

It has been the long-standing practice of the Turkish government to pressure the leaders of minority religious groups in Turkey to issue public statements in defense of Turkish policies and war efforts or to condemn Armenian Genocide resolutions adopted by various foreign countries.

The leaders of the Armenian, Assyrian, Greek and Jewish communities are used to this practice and have willingly complied with the Turkish demands knowing that not doing so can only spell trouble for them personally and for their respective communities.

In the past, such orders were given to the minority leaders in a more delicate manner. For example, a Turkish official would either call or visit the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul and discreetly suggest that it may be a good idea for him to issue a public announcement on some political issue. Naturally, the previous Patriarchs have never refused such suggestions which are more like orders from the Turkish government. The only difference between the reactions of different Patriarchs has been to somewhat soften or harden the language of their announcements.

What we are experiencing now is completely different. The autocratic government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become so tyrannical that last week it sent a letter to the four minority religious leaders in Turkey asking that they sign it and send it back to the President's Communication Office. All four immediately complied.

The minor surprise was that a week before President Erdogan sent a letter to the minority religious leaders, the

Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey issued an announcement basically supporting the sentiments expressed in Erdogan's subsequent letter. The Patriarch should not be blamed neither for writing his own propaganda letter in advance nor signing the government's dictated letter. After all, the Patriarch knows what is expected of him and made his announcement without waiting for official orders.

The issue in this case is the Turkish military's recent invasion of Northern Syria which resulted in the deaths of scores of Turkish soldiers. The Armenian Patriarchate issued the following statement:

"The attack in Idlib [Syria], resulting in the martyrdom of 33 heroic Turkish soldiers, caused a great shock in our country. Wholeheartedly sharing the pain of our nation, we seek God's mercy for the martyrs. Our heroic army is the guarantor of our state's existence. To all the members of the army who have lost their comrades-in-arms we urge endurance. We also continue to pray that peace may reign in the world and particularly in our region. In the name of the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey, the Religious Council, and all members of the community, we would like to share with the public our belief that it will be possible to overcome this difficult process in an atmosphere of unity and solidarity."

The Patriarchate subsequently signed the more propagandistic letter drafted by the office of President Erdogan. Here are excerpts from that two-page letter:

"Our country has always been a pioneer of the steps that serve peace in its region and in the world, inspired by its ancient history and deep-rooted civilization. Since our War of Independence, very important struggles have been carried out for our independence, security and welfare.

"In each of these struggles, the spirit of mobilization revealed by our cherished nation constitutes a unique example for the 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 to question Turkey's presence in Syria means to ignore our border security.

"Various countries' approach in favor of terrorist groups

and in support of regional instability has shown that we often fight this alone.

"However, our nation, which has a foresight, has always been and will continue to be with its state. As non-governmental organizations, we take pride in being part of this cherished nation. In line with the developments in our region, we state that we are behind every decision taken by our state against these cruel murderers and monsters for 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 protect our national security, prevent new humanitarian crises and establish peace in our region.

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

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

Toma Chelik, a member of the Turkish Parliament representing HDP, Kurdish-affiliated party, sent a letter to the Vice President of Turkey, asking the following questions:

•Who prepared the text of the President's letter to the minorities?

•Who decided to send the letter to the minorities?

•To what other groups was this letter sent?

•Will those refusing to sign the letter be punished?

At a time when thousands of innocent citizens of Turkey and dozens of journalists have been thrown in jail by the Erdogan regime, anyone who does not obey the diktats of Erdogan risks incarceration. While President Erdogan is unable to come to an agreement with Western Europe, the United States and Russia on the conflict with Syria, it is much easier for him to take his frustration and revenge on innocent people within Turkey.

Brave Women of Artsakh Made Their Mark in History

By Anoush Ter Taulian

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 definitely 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 women warrior 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 bad I didn't have an Armenian education, so in NYC I looked through most of the books in the Prelacy library searching for any information of women resisters. 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 it on a T-shirt. Later when I saw a textbook with a drawing of Aytsemmnik, a woman archer who helped defend Ani in 1126 ad, 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 battlefronts and was very excited to meet many inspirational women soldiers like Margarite Sarkissian, a sniper and Siranoush Arushanian, an older woman who said "I don't want to knit socks, give me a gun." I wrote about them and many other Artsakh women soldiers with their photos in Armenian newspapers, but my articles were not on the internet when I googled women soldiers in Artsakh. Even my article Why I Became a Soldier published in the Armenian Weekly on November 28, 2018 was missing.

I didn't want Artsakh women soldiers I know to be left out of women's history. So I have mentioned them on public radio and TV, at conferences, talks at women's studies gatherings and meetings at the UN on women in war and conflict. It is healing for me to march in public where people can put photos on social media of my sign that mentions the indigenous, self defense Artsakh struggle and has the faces of some Artsakh women soldiers

In Artsakh I was not only facing Azeri attacks, there was also the worldwide violence against women including violence against women in Artsakh. My freedom fighter legacy in

Artsakh was muddled by sexist notions that a woman alone wouldn't come there for good intentions. I also had to deal with many corrupt men. When an unscrupulous journalist Leo Nicholian was beating me up and stealing my camera, his friend Max Silvaslian watched saying "This is a lesson to you this is a man's world." Now he is a well known photographer.

They regarded me as competition they were getting rid of and spread false rumors I was a spy. I also told many people like Dr.Najarian about what Leo beating me but someone just said he should only beat his wife or sister. Nothing happened to him and later he killed two women in Yerevan with a grenade. Now I am so happy to see the #MeToo movement in which some abusers are being exposed and held accountable.

In America there is no Artsakh women war veteran's support group so I go to activities with Veteran's For Peace which is mainly comprised of Vietnam veterans many of whom feel the war was wrong and feel guilty for killing innocent people. I don't have that kind of guilt having been a part of an indigenous self defense struggle. Also it's terrible to see the proliferation of school shootings by children who have no spiritual compass and so killings on impersonal video games. If I talk about the importance of learning how to use weapons for self defense, some people who use the word peace get upset because they don't realize there is little peace without self defense.

Now indigenous peoples have to worry about long distance electronic warfare and drone attacks. The Trump administration has now embraced weapons prohibited by more than 160 countries including cluster bombs and anti personnel landmines containing deadly explosives which can kill civilians long after the fighting. I have firsthand knowledge of their damage on so many people in Artsakh.

After reading so many horrific events of the Armenian Genocide in Artsakh it was very healing to see the Azeri attackers being defeated by courageous Armenians and marvel how all the honest citizens survived. Thankfully many things have changed for the better. When Nikol Pashinyan was elected on an anti corruption platform, I was so glad when some of the commanding thieves were arrested and their stolen goods were confiscated.

I still have to deal with my PTSD and have been working with an Armenian energetic healer. I think of the brave, caring women soldiers I was honored to meet like Arevik Sarkissian. In the early days of the independence movement she made an Artsakh flag. When she put it on a flagpole, the Azeris arrested her. After her release she sewed 16 more and joined the underground movement, carrying bullets in her bra and fake stomach. Later she was wounded in heavy fighting in Martekert district. She is an antidote when I tire of the beauty-obsessed materialistic Kardashians being the Armenian women the world knows.

Now with the internet women can be their own historians and make up for the lack of Armenian women in Armenian history. The Daring Armenian Woman site which profiles some Armenian women on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdhZpg7irII> only had about 100 views and I hope more people would check it out and create their own sites to include the stories of wide spectrum of all Armenian women.

I sacrificed my health and resources for Artsakh and still need support. I was happy when the Armenian International Women's Association acknowledged me as a war veteran at one of their meetings and I am fortunate to get respect from indigenous groups that are more matriarchal like the Tahinos. I have the herstories of the women I served with. Please contact me if you want to include me in events about Artsakh.

(Anoush Ter Taulian is a graduate of the University of California Berkeley. In 1992, she decided to relocate to Artsakh where she volunteered in the liberation struggle alongside Monte Melkonian. She has depicted the Armenian struggle for freedom in poetry, paintings, videos, and radio.)



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 “imbuing it with a currency we will hear tonight.”

Arkun, the executive director of the Tekeyan 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.

“Ani has a special place among Armenians in that it is a symbol of Armenian culture. It is an almost mystical 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 last 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 Byzantine Empire gradually moved eastward and took over Van and Vaspurakan. 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 (Nikolai) 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 2016.

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.

Catholicos of All Armenians Matteos II Izmirlian 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 Matteos II in 1909, the area was under Russian rule, as Turkey had recently lost the Russo-Turkish war in 1878.

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, including 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 toning 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 word 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



Aram Arkun (Jirair Hovsepian photo)

Turkey today are cut off from Armenian sites in Turkey. While the ruins of the city sit 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 unsub-

stantiated charges, was one of the people who in 2016 met at the United Nations with the Turkish Cultural Representative, along with Balakian, Prof. Christina Maranci, Prof. Rachel Goshgarian.

A reception follows the lecture.

The Ruins of Ani is available on Amazon.

