

(PHOTO FROM ANTONY BLINKEN'S TWITTER FEED)



Secretary of State Antony Blinken, center, shaking hands with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, left, and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov in Washington

Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks in Washington to Last ‘A Few Days’

WASHINGTON (Azatutyun) — Bilateral talks between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Washington will be held over the course of “a few days”, according to a senior official in the United States privy to the details of the negotiations schedule.

“Both parties have acknowledged that this is the first time that they will be able to meet over the course of a few days,” the official said. “We expect discussions throughout the week. Our goal is to make sure that the ministers are able to sit down and talk to each other.”

The first bilateral meeting between Ararat Mirzoyan, of Armenia, and Jeyhun Bayramov, of Azerbaijan, took place on

Monday, May 1, and followed their separate meetings with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken as well as their trilateral meeting in Washington.

Prior to the meetings Blinken said in phone calls with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Ilham Aliyev — that the United States remained committed to supporting the peace efforts of the two countries.

The official at the State Department said that the Washington talks between Mirzoyan and Bayramov were focused on trying to hammer out an agreement on “normalization of relations.”

“It is for both parties to nor-

malize their relations to be able to live together [...], to strengthen their economic ties and perhaps even to reinforce their collective security in the region,” he said, adding that all issues, including issues of how ethnic minorities are treated in both countries in terms of their rights and security, are “being discussed.”

Another senior US official familiar with the negotiations said that “rights and security are something that we believe is very important in terms of what the future of the region looks like, is something that we have continuously engaged with throughout the region, and we will continue to be engaged on.”

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Solemn Funeral Services Held For Edmond Azadian in Detroit

DETROIT — Armenian intellectual and political leader Edmond Y. Azadian was buried on Saturday, April 21, in Detroit’s Woodlawn Cemetery, after a week-end of solemn visitation and funeral services allowed family, friends and Armenian church and community leaders from the United



States and abroad to pay their last respects.

Azadian, 87, had passed away in Florida on March 25, but had wanted his funeral to take place in his hometown, at his beloved St. John Armenian Church of Southfield.

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Armenian Airline Barred From Turkish Airspace

By Nane Sahakian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An Armenian airline has been banned from operating commercial flights through Turkish airspace for still unclear reasons, its representative said on Monday, May 1.

On April 29, a Flyone Armenia plane operating a flight from Paris to Yerevan had to land in Chisinau, Moldova, after Turkey’s aviation authorities banned it from entering the country’s airspace. Flyone Armenia said it had not been informed about the decision in advance.

The Armenian airline’s representative told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that they still did not know why Turkey had revised its permission.

“Some of our flights to Europe that are operated through Turkish airspace cannot be carried out using Turkish airspace for the time being. We have no information about the reasons,” Aram Ananyan, chairman of Flyone Armenia’s board, said.

He said that the Armenian airline had received all the permissions to operate flights through Turkish airspace during the 2023 summer season in advance. “We do not see any

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VEM Ensemble to Perform in Detroit, Boston and Montreal in May

WATERTOWN — The VEM Ensemble of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Armenian Music Program at the Herb Alpert School of Music is coming to Detroit, Boston and Montreal as part of a tour sponsored by the Tekayan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada, with full concerts on, respectively, May 9, 11 and 13, held with local cosponsoring institutions and organizations.

VEM, which means “rock” in Armenian, has performed throughout North American and Europe, including Armenia, to critical acclaim, and has been featured on various CDs. In its current configuration as a string quartet, the members include Professor Movses Pogossian on violin, master’s student Ela Kodzas on violin, master’s student Damon Zavala on viola, and UCLA alumnus Niall

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YEREVAN

Future Armenian Convention Attempts Citizen Involvement

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MEXICO

First Khachkars In Mexico Inaugurated

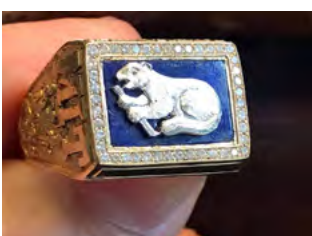
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MASSACHUSETTS

Prof. Acemoglu Receives Unique Ring from Hachikian

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Tatoyan Foundation: Azerbaijanis Laying Mines, Committing Thefts

YEREVAN (news.am) — The Tatoyan Foundation carried out fact-finding work in Nerkin Hand, Srashen, and Chakaten villages of Kapan city and on the Kapan-Chakaten motorway of Armenia's Syunik Province, the Tatoyan Foundation announced on May 2.

The new evidence obtained confirms that the Azerbaijani servicemen continue the illegal fortification work, and have disrupted people's safety and normal life.

According to Arman Tatoyan, director of the Tatoyan Foundation, the Azerbaijanis are shooting from positions near the village, thereby trying to intimidate people.

He added that the Azerbaijanis are laying mines the parts of Armenia's sovereign territory near their combat positions, as well as commit thefts, including stealing cattle.

Armenia Population Dips Below 3 Million

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The permanent population of the Republic of Armenia is 2,928,914, according to the preliminary results of the census released by the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia.

The current population, according to the census, is 2,638,917. This number "includes the sum of the number of the population permanently (usually) residing in Armenia and present at the time of enumeration and temporarily present at the time of enumeration. The number of temporary present people includes persons who are in Armenia for no more than one year at the time of the census and persons who do not live permanently in Armenia."

Azerbaijan Demands Expulsion of Dadivank Monastery Monks

YEREVAN (news.am) — Azerbaijan has submitted a demand to expel the Armenian clergymen from Dadivank Monastery in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

"Armenian priests in Khudavang Monastery [i.e., Dadivank Monastery] should leave there," said the chairman of the Azerbaijani State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations, Mubariz Gurbanli, the Azerbaijani APA reported.

Instead, they said incorrectly, the monastery "belongs to Caucasus Albania," Gurbanli said.

Thus, the Azerbaijani authorities have begun to massively destroy the Armenian cultural and religious heritage in the Azerbaijani-occupied territories of Artsakh.

The clergymen in Dadivank continue their spiritual service thanks to the mission of the Russian peacekeepers.

"As for the false claims of Dadivank being Aghvani [(Albanian)], it is an undeniable historical fact that the monastery was originally Armenian and had no relation with the Aghvani church, let alone with today's newly discovered Aghvani Udi religious community," the statement added.

Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks in Washington To Last 'A Few Days'

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The official also reiterated the importance of ensuring free movement of commercial and private vehicles along the Lachin Corridor between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh that was completely blocked by Azerbaijan on April 23 when it established a checkpoint at the entrance to the five-kilometer-wide corridor.

Blinken, before the meeting, over the weekend, pledged Washington's continued support for peace efforts by Armenia and Azerbaijan as he spoke over the phone separately with the leaders of the two countries.

The readout of Blinken's phone call with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan released by a Department of State spokesperson on April 29 said that the US secretary of state spoke with the Armenian leader "to underscore the importance of Armenia-Azerbaijan peace discussions and pledged continued US support."

"Secretary Blinken reiterated that direct dialogue and diplomacy are the only path to a lasting peace in the South Caucasus. He expressed his appreciation for the Prime Minister's continued commitment to the peace process," he added.

The next day Blinken repeated the message of the importance of peace discussions and continued US support in his phone call with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during which he also "shared his belief that peace was possible."

The phone calls came amid heightened tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan after Baku on April 23 set up a checkpoint at the entrance to the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.

Azerbaijan's roadblock tightened what was already an effective blockade of the region by government-backed Azerbaijani protesters since December.

According to a spokesperson in Washington, during his April 30 phone call with Aliyev Blinken also "expressed the United States' deep concern that Azerbaijan's establishment of a checkpoint on the Lachin corridor undermines efforts to establish confidence in the peace process, and emphasized the importance of reopening the Lachin corridor to commercial and private vehicles as soon as possible."

According to his press office, Pashinyan also raised the issue of the Lachin corridor in his phone call with Blinken. In particular, he reportedly emphasized that "the steps taken by the Azerbaijani side in the Lachin corridor are aimed at the consistent implementation of its policy of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh and the complete eviction of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh."

The Armenian prime minister also "emphasized the importance of the adequate response of the international community to Azerbaijan's actions, which undermine regional security, and taking active steps towards the unconditional implementation of the order of the International Court of Justice."

The Hague-based court ruled on February 22 that the Azerbaijani government must "take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions."

Azerbaijan Issues Preconditions

Before the meeting, Armenia responded to a number of preconditions Azerbaijan

had set forth for achieving normalization between the two countries, stating that Baku's policies "do not contribute to reducing tensions and establishing peace in the region."

Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations recently advanced as many as eight preconditions to Armenia, including the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian withdrawal from eight occupied Azerbaijani villages and Armenia's refusal to have territorial claims to Azerbaijan.

In written comments to RFE/RL's Armenian Service regarding these preconditions a spokesperson for Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "far-fetched narratives and demands of the Azerbaijani side

Commenting on Azerbaijan's claim regarding "eight Azerbaijani villages occupied by Armenia," Badalyan reminded that still back in the 1990s Azerbaijan occupied the Armenian village of Artsvashen, the arable lands of the villages of Vazashen and Aygeovit in the Tavush region and 70 percent of the arable land of the villages of Berkaber and Paravakar. She said that after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, as a result of renewed aggression, Azerbaijan occupied another 150 square kilometers of sovereign Armenian territory.

"It is surprising that about the occupation of territories by Armenia speak officials of a country, the top leadership of which openly makes claims regarding the sovereign territories of Armenia, sometimes



Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, greets Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan (Photo from Antony Blinken's Twitter feed)

are changing day by day, and not only for the Republic of Armenia, but, we think, also for the entire international community, it is already difficult to follow the speculations of the Azerbaijani side."

Ani Badalyan said that the armed forces of Armenia served only in the sovereign territory of the republic. She stressed that the defense forces in Nagorno-Karabakh were made up of local ethnic Armenians.

"It is known that since the 1990s, in order to protect themselves against the aggression carried out by Azerbaijan and prevent mass violence against the civilian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenians of Karabakh formed the Defense Army, which still carries out its service in order to prevent the implementation of the mentioned operations planned by Azerbaijan decades ago," she said.

"The Defense Army was and remains relevant only because of the ethnic cleansing policy pursued by Azerbaijan, including physical and psychological intimidation of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, murders, periodic violations of the ceasefire, blocking of the Lachin Corridor, interruptions in the supply of food and medicine to Nagorno-Karabakh, disruptions in natural gas and electricity supply," the representative of Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs added.

also stating that there is no border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and therefore it is not violated as a result of the advancement of their armed forces. The president of Azerbaijan has repeatedly openly admitted the occupation of the territories of the Republic of Armenia, threatening to seize new territories through the use of force if his maximalist demands are not met," she said.

The spokesperson of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also noted that Armenia's calls to Azerbaijan to respect the border recognized by both countries in the Alma-Ata Declaration adopted by former Soviet republics amid disintegration of the USSR in 1991, as well as to provide legal justifications for claims regarding some of the mentioned villages remained unanswered.

"Moreover, the proposal of the Armenian side on a mirror withdrawal of troops from the 1975 border, which would definitely help to reduce border tensions and solve a number of existing problems, also remained unanswered," she added.

The representative of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also stressed Azerbaijan's "changing narrative" on the situation with the blocking of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.



ARMENIA

Armenia Tree Project, Armenian Missionary Association of America, and Tufenkian Foundation Provide Seed Potatoes to Artsakh Residents

YEREVAN — In a move to bolster Artsakh’s food security, 90 tons of seed potatoes were delivered to the residents of Artsakh’s Martuni Region through a collaboration between the Armenia Tree Project (ATP), Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), and the Tufenkian Foundation. The humanitarian aid initiative comes at a critical time as Artsakh has suffered critical shortages of food, medicine, and other essentials due to Azerbaijan’s 120+ day blockade.

The 90 tons of seed potatoes arrived in Stepanakert through local assistance and were then transported to villages in Martuni by trucks provided by Martuni’s Regional Administration. They were distributed to villagers with less than 1.5 hectares of land. Due to the current shortage of fuel, many villagers had to transport their allotment to their farms by pack animal and planted the seed potatoes by hand.

“We continue to stand by our commitment to Artsakh and its people, particularly in these difficult times. With the uncertainty of outside access due to the blockade, helping Artsakh to become self-sufficient has become a top priority,” stated Tufenkian’s Operations Director, Greg Bedian. “We are pleased to be partnering with ATP and AMAA in this endeavor and are grateful for major benefactors like the Armen and Gloria Hampar Family Foundation without whose support this initiative would not have been possible.”

The seed potatoes will provide much needed aid given the closure of the Lachin corridor. Residents of Artsakh have been



Villagers in Martuni receive seed potatoes.

closed off from the outer world since December 12, 2022, and have lacked basic survival necessities, including food. With the addition of ongoing harassment from Azerbaijani forces, the safest and most immediate way for Artsakh residents to survive is to plant seeds in their backyards and greenhouses. Despite difficulties, it is anticipated that the initiative will help yield over 700 tons of potatoes during the fall harvest, helping to ensure sufficient reserves for the winter.

Carolyn Mugar, founder of ATP, ex-

pressed pride in the joint efforts by multiple organizations, “In this unprecedented emergency it is important that we all work together to support our brothers and sisters in Artsakh,” she said.

This initiative was developed in collaboration with Artsakh’s Agriculture Ministry and Martuni’s Regional Administration. ATP, AMAA, and Tufenkian Foundation hope to continue providing food security assistance to residents in Artsakh.

“Our commitment to Artsakh is unwavering and we shall continue serving the

people in Artsakh and empowering Artsakhtsis to secure self-dependence and excellence in development and education,” said AMAA Executive Director, Zaven Khanjian. “As such, AMAA will contribute to this effort from its Empower an Artsakh Family Fund to help farmers develop their lands and produce products vital to their living and survival.”

All three organizations have had a long history of working in Artsakh and have re-doubled their efforts since the 44-Day War.

Artsakh Should Be Linked to Armenia through Lachin Corridor, Authorities Tell New Russian Peacekeepers’ Commander

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — Artsakh authorities on May 1 held a meeting with Alexander Lentsov, the newly appointed commander of the Russian peacekeeping troops. Participating in the meeting were the President of the Republic of Artsakh, the Minister of State, the Ministers of Internal Affairs and Defense.

The officials reaffirmed the position of the Republic of Artsakh regarding the existing situation, Minister of State Gurchen

Nersisyan informs. According to him, the position is that the settlement of the situation should be based on the tripartite statement of November 9, 2020. Point 6 of that statement stipulates that:

Artsakh should be connected with Armenia through the 5-kilometer-wide Lachin Corridor

The Lachin Corridor should be under the control of the Russian peacekeeping forces Azerbaijan must guarantee the safety

of the movement of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions through the Lachin Corridor.

The commander of the Russian peacekeeping troops said he will have meetings with the Azerbaijani side in the coming days and will be able to address the issue and provide information at the end of the week, Gurchen Nersisyan said in a Facebook post.

He appealed to the citizens of the Repub-



Alexander Lentsov

lic of Armenia and the authorities to take all steps, all possible political and diplomatic measures to ensure the safety of the citizens of the Republic of Artsakh, to protect the right of self-determination of the people of Artsakh, and to ensure the fulfillment of the provisions of the Tripartite Statement.

He appealed to the international community to ensure the fulfillment of Azerbaijan’s commitment to unblock the corridor connecting Artsakh to Armenia. “The consequence of your inaction or passivity is the daily suffering of the residents of Artsakh,” the State Minister said.

He also appealed to Armenians around the world, saying “turn your face to Artsakh, see the people who are keeping Armenian Artsakh at the cost of suffering.”



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Program participants

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Lilit Keheyan

Caroline Tufenkian

Dr. Simon Simonian

Vatche Mankerian

Shahe Mankerian

THURSDAY, MAY 25, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Agajanian Auditorium – AGBU Manoogian-Demirjian School

6844 Oakdale Ave., Canoga Park CA 91306



A group photo of participants in the Future Armenian Convention

Future Armenian Convention Attempts Expanding Citizen Involvement in Vital Issues for Nation

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Future Armenian Convention, a type of a citizens' assembly (see prior coverage in the *Mirror-Spectator*) took place in Yerevan on March 10-12. One hundred participants from Armenia and Artsakh and one hundred from the far-flung communities of the Armenian diaspora were selected by lottery, including this author from the Boston area.

Those who physically were able to make it to Armenia met each day in the large Dvin Music Hall for discussions that concluded in voting on goals for the Armenian nation and proposals for action. Each of the three days focused on a different broad theme which was one of 15 goals previously chosen as significant by the Future Armenian Initiative: historic responsibility, Armenia-diaspora unity, and demography (increasing the population). Written reports had been given to participants on each theme that were prepared previously by committees of experts. In addition, a video summary of each theme was screened in the morning.

Each morning, participants were divided into small groups seated around a table in the large hall to begin discussions, which were led by a facilitator or moderator, and summarized by a second person with a laptop. There were large screens on the walls of the hall on which the summaries were projected and constantly changed. The groups were chosen to bring together different types of people, and changed every day, while during meal and coffee breaks, it was possible to meet many others. There were also observers occasionally joining the various tables. Many of these were activists or experts from the committees that had previously prepared reports. They did not have the right to vote on the proposals.

The majority of the proposals were prepared previously by the expert committees, but a small number of new ones from the participants were added to the list prior to voting each day. See the summary of the voting in a separate article at mirrorspectator.com. Here, the views of two of the formulators of the process will be presented.

Initial Self-Evaluation

Artak Apitonian, executive director of the Future Armenian Development Foundation, declared that the step of including the diaspora along with Armenia and Artsakh in the citizens' assembly in Armenia meant this was going to be a pilot, not only for Armenians, but on a world scale, since this has never been done before for any people. Another aspect which was experimental

was the formation of the expert committees. In the classical citizens' assemblies there might only be a handful of experts. In the Armenian case, there was an open-ended expert group which worked for around five months, Apitonian said, including experts from all possible schools of thought, including from the left, right, nationalists and globalists.

The current polarization in Armenian society is a complicating element, Apitonian continued. With all this considered, he said, "Leaving aside modesty, it exceeded all my expectations, with the level of engagement of people trying to come together, experts, and various Armenian institutions."

Media coverage of the convention in Armenia was extensive, said Apitonian, despite the fact that the convention took place on a weekend, when Armenian media tend to be less active. According to his office, 84 media outlets, including 10 television stations, reported on it 366 times. There were 94 videos and 259 articles published, while 13 media outlets shared the online live webcasts, which lasted 7 hours per day. It also was covered in the US, France, Canada, Georgia, Russia, Czechia, Netherlands and Lebanon. Only one television channel in Armenia did not cover the convention, Apitonian said.

He accepted that there were certain lapses, such as the inability of 7 out of 10 Artsakh Armenians to participate due to the blockade (along with Future Armenian co-founder Ruben Vardanyan, who was only once able to deliver a speech via Internet). He also hoped for more participation from the Armenian government, although there were a lot of staff members from the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, and High Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan himself came for the closing ceremony. "Nevertheless," declared Apitonian, "we would have gained even further if various ministries had their say in many things discussed around the table."

As a participant, this author observed that almost no translation took place at the three tables at which he was seated, and, admittedly anecdotally, he did not see translation taking place elsewhere for participants. That raised a question about the representative nature of the selected diasporans, who in

countries like the US and France, often do not speak Armenian. Apitonian responded that perhaps self-selection affected this factor, plus there were not as many registrants from the diaspora as ideal (5,714 people in all had registered their willingness to participate, of which 3,170 were from Armenia, 2,234 from various countries of the diaspora, and 200 from Artsakh). Nevertheless, he said that while initially some 25 or 27 diasporan participants had asked for translation, and there were around 20 translators at the ready during the first day, participants did not feel it necessary to utilize them.

While over 2,000 proposals or comments were made by the participants at the forum,



Artak Apitonian, executive director of the Future Armenian Development Foundation, speaking at the convention

only a small number of the former were voted on at the convention. The comments or arguments, Apitonian said, were not suitable for voting.

However, everything will be published as an annex to a final report.

The proposals were first categorized into blocks according to subject by the Future Armenian's people, and then those that were similar or repetitive were united. Apitonian said that for example, one of the proposals eventually voted on, concerning the organization of regional assemblies in communities, was independently suggested by 12 different tables.

During the convention, Armenians from different cultures were assembled together at tables and were united by Armenian culture, Apitonian said, adding that the atmosphere created showed that "bringing different expertise and experiences and trying to work together is something that we must not be afraid of. This is not our weakness but our strength."

The next step is the preparation of the final report from Iswe. The Future Armenian assigned Iswe to prepare the report because,

Apitonian said, aside from obtaining an outside broader view, "our philosophy is that we are the convenor of the event but are not the leaders of the event, because there should be no leadership. It should be a public initiative and should continue that way."

Affiliation Networks

After the report comes an even more unique element of the Future Armenian Initiative. Apitonian said that the work of classical citizens' assemblies stop the moment they produce their outcome or reports. After that, it is up to governments or other organizations to continue the work. However, in the Armenian case, he said, "We want to use this momentum to bring other organizations together so that we continue collectively as well, not only through discussions but also implementation."

He remarked that the Future Armenian Foundation was already in contact with many organizations, ranging from large, globally well-established ones to new, tiny ones. He said, "The main thing is that we don't close doors to anybody." Future Armenian held meetings in Yerevan and various Armenian provinces with the representatives of many NGOs to inform them of the process. It invited organizations to send observers to the convention and promised them that all the rules of engagement and action will be thoroughly discussed with the NGO community before commencing action. Using a food metaphor, Apitonian said, "We are not going to bring something ready to serve and everybody will enjoy but rather we need to cook everything together, even choosing the ingredients."

He was hesitant to speak more specifically about how the implementation networks would work, but declared that it is first necessary to have specific targets to work on. Therefore, "When we come up with the reports and the final outcome of the voting, and have all these things more thoroughly analyzed, we will produce some four or five directions and we will try to invite organization to work on these programmatic directions in order to move forward. That will be the basis of forming affiliation networks – not to first start on the affiliation and then think about what we are trying to do, but rather, to bring people together on a specific mission and then try to enlarge the mission and the scope of engagement."

Though the initiative could carry out programs itself, he said he would rather create a big network for each particular program. For some projects there could be three participant organizations, and ten for others. The Future Armenian Foundation may not even participate itself sometimes as an orga-



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nization, but instead just provide ideas and advice. Certain already existing projects have, for example, requested assistance for acceleration or enlargement.

Edele Hovnanian of the Hrair and Anna Foundation declared in a recent interview that “the hard problems are so large that without working with the government, these problems are not solvable,” and they are not problems that can be solved just with money. When Apitonian was asked whether the Future Armenian Initiative would start solely with civil society programs or also propose to the government some of the largescale projects voted on during the convention, he replied, “It is premature to talk about this, but I don’t want to give up on government. I don’t think there is a centralized approach of the government to not work. It may be easy with certain agencies, and maybe difficult with other ones. We will try to work our way together.”

He shared Hovnanian’s opinion that certain things require strong government commitment and participation over the longterm. He said, “For that, a longtime commitment of the main political forces are necessary as well...overall the aim of our discussions is to create a vision of the future. It should not depend on one or two or three parties. It should be a common vision. Then we may be successful, if all the political elites and all society works towards that vision.”

He repeated his optimism for the next phase, stating, “I sense the readiness in society to work together. People are tired of divisions and uncertainty. They want to be part of change and they want to work for change. They understand that nobody will bring anything ready for them to serve, so they will need to create their future by their own hands.”

Timeline

While working on creating the affiliation networks, planning continues for new conventions. Apitonian said, “We understand that we cannot go on with the development of these 15 goals [through studies, discussions and conventions] for ages, but we also cannot be in a hurry to push in a wrong manner....Our aim is to create a public sense of unity and work together, setting up goals and reaching those goals.”

There were proposals to have the next convention in an Armenian province, but Apitonian said this would be a real challenge because it was difficult even in Yerevan to find a good venue. Others proposed having the next convention done remotely, online, in order to involve even larger numbers of participants. It could be possible to divide into groups of 10-12 people and then come together as an assembly of 400 to 500 participants.

Meanwhile, the participants of this convention have already created sites on social media to keep in touch. Apitonian said that the person who created the first social network asked his staff for help in managing it, and indeed it is already partially doing this. In addition, the Future Armenian Foundation will continue to maintain its online platform to facilitate ongoing discussions, exchange of ideas, and reactions to further steps. As soon as some tangible progress on programs to be implemented is achieved, Apitonian said that a round of Zoom meetings for all participants will allow them to ask questions and remain informed.

Some participants on their own have contacted Apitonian to see if they could organize meetings to share their impressions and experiences in their own communities, and he has told them that it is fine by the Future Armenian Foundation but it is up to them to decide whether to do this. He said that this is again a positive step towards garnering support for the initiatives of the Future Armenian, stressing that “Our ultimate goal is that our collective visions are shared by the

majority of Armenians. We definitely need not to concentrate on short-term success. We need to think about the long-term processes and larger issues.” He felt this process may also be healing for the polarized Armenian society.

Comparisons

The Future Initiative had hired Osca, a social impact consultancy based in the United Kingdom, to help plan the convention process. Osca merged with another foundation last year to become a social impact foundation called Iswe. Rich Wilson, originally a director of Osca, became CEO of Iswe. He



Rich Wilson

has been involved for several decades in designing and facilitating democratic participation processes and new organizations both in the UK and globally, including in the US. He was involved in the French citizens’ assembly and the UN assembly devoted to climate change.

Wilson explained that the Future Armenian process is a combination of what in the US is called a 21st century town hall meeting and in Europe, a citizens’ summit, including both online facilitation and aggregation of opinion data on screens and the random selection element of participants.

Wilson noted that the unique combination of diasporan plus homeland participants made the outreach and registration process more difficult, so that in some places the initial pool was not as big as he wanted it to be, but, he exclaimed, “I feel like the fact that they pulled anything off is kind of a miracle because it was so complicated. You can’t underestimate the challenge of what was done. The effort to generate a pool in so many different places is significant.”

Wilson, like Apitonian, pointed to the affiliation network as a unique component. He said, “I think this is very shrewd because often, where citizen assemblies go wrong, is when they have an expectation that power holders such as the politicians will take things further. In the field this is called a mandate.” The affiliation network gives the movement its own power base to get things done.

Ruminating during a late April interview, he said, “I think the way that Artak led the process was very streetwise. You can tell he has been in government and he knows how things happen in Armenia. He very shrewdly, in my opinion, also had the [expert] committee process, which of course generates evidence and learning to inform good quality discussions. It also involved them [the experts] in attending the event, thereby getting into the full process itself, so that when recommendations come out afterwards, it is with a sense of ownership.” In previous instances Wilson was involved in, he said that the committees of experts were less involved as part of the routes to impact.

Concerning the question of the involvement of the Armenian government, Wilson pointed to the Irish citizens’ assembly in which one-third of the participants were politicians. He said the reason that was done was to ensure that there was a really strong relationship with the political class and this worked very well. He said, “The question I have in my mind is, what is the balance that this process needs.”

At the same time, Wilson said that the most important thing really is not government involvement or, in his terms, how the processes dock with the government. He said, “I have had processes, docks endorsed by prime ministers and presidents, and they still had limited impact.” On the other hand, he said, “I have rarely had a process that had a very high profile that has not had an impact. Profile, I think, has a much stronger

correlation with impact, government impact specifically, than the kind of official nature of the relationship.”

Therefore, he said that it is more important while continuing to build and maintain a relationship with the Armenian government that the Future Armenian initiative ensure its high profile. The government may not be acting on its priorities this year, but then the media and other actors can choose its recommendations to advocate and they can be reviewed with the government in one or two years’ time.

In other words, he said, “This creates an accountability mechanism with the government. You know how government works – it gets distracted because of events. Things happen, and the government has to respond to them...I haven’t managed to think of a better way of doing it.”

Unlike citizens’ assemblies in Western Europe, the existential threat faced by Armenians in Artsakh and Armenia, Wilson



A view of the Dvin Music Hall with some of the electronic wall displays

said, “generates a potency and urgency of discourse that I think was incredibly helpful in getting people to participate.” At the same time, he found another distinguishing element from countries like the UK, he said: “The thing that I felt was very striking about Armenia, which really did remind me of work I have done in places like Greece and Turkey, is that there is such a strong intelligentsia...I felt that there was a very deep-rooted culture of political activation, and engagement with the issues.”

Politics

When asked about the ideology of the citizens’ assembly process that he is advocating, he said, “Around this there definitely should not be an ideology...but of course, processes in and of themselves do have inherent values. This is reality, and so there is a difference between an authoritarian response and a democratic response.” His view is that not only Armenia but many other countries around the world are facing substantial challenges, not just security issues, such as climate, the next pandemic and costs. He said, “existing governance systems are not sufficiently up to the job of responding to these crises. I think we have models to prove that. I think it has become clear from the pandemic and climate that we are going to need to be activated and build resilience in response to our extremely big challenges in all these countries.”

China offered one model of response, sacrificing freedoms in the process (Wilson was careful not to mention Russia in this context), but his own choice, he said, is a more democratic and empowering one, helping people to connect on the basis of civic issues. However, he appears to have been forced to retreat at least in his choice of words. He said, “We as an organization do not use the word democracy because, unfortunately in many parts of the world, democracy has become a loaded term. We have learned this through experience. We

now use the word people power because it is about trying to enable people in response to the challenges...It is people power vs. top down, and we are in favor of people power.”

On the question of how politicians or those interested in obtaining political power may relate in practice to the Future Armenian movement, Wilson said, “There will be many routes to change. Some of them may be through some of the people that have relations with it, current and future politicians. Frankly, because I think we need new governance models and governance innovation, I would always seek to work with – whatever the motivations may be – the key political actors, provided you have a legitimate process whereby you are giving citizens power, whereby you are seeking to be representative, provided you are not allowing those individuals to influence the process. If any politician seeks to use it as a steppingstone to further their career, provided that does not undermine the legitimacy

of the process, I haven’t got a problem with that.”

After giving the example of French President Emmanuel Macron using citizen assemblies, he concluded, “This is how politicians support things when it helps them get power. That is how the world works, right?”

The Future of the Future Armenian Initiative

Wilson said that there was a real opportunity in Armenia to prototype new governance systems or frameworks involving far more people and activating them as real partners in nation building. He said there are three reasons why he feels so positive about the Future Armenian approach: “One is that I think the leadership of the Future Armenian team knows how to effect change in their country. Two, it is backed by its founders, who can get things done. Thirdly, it just felt like within the wider network of people who were there [at the convention], be it members of the church, members of the government, and civil society activists, there were senior people who were prepared to support it, so I felt it got good traction.”

In terms of the next steps, he said, “the question for me is really how – as opposed to this being a convention, a conference, whereby we turn up and people make recommendations – how do we turn this into a system of activation and governance, where things are taken forth by that network, in and of itself... At the end of the day, what matters is improving lives and the security of the Armenian people. I do feel that a good start has been made. I am excited about the possibility to do some innovation around this process.”

In perhaps three years’ time, he can see the Future Armenian initiative as a reciprocal global network, he said, with hubs in disparate areas where the Armenian diaspora has particular strengths and power, linking back to helping Armenia but not in any way in competition with the state.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Parliament Delegation
Visits Cyprus

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — An Armenian parliamentary delegation this week met with the President of Cyprus Nikos Christodoulides during a visit to Cyprus.

“The President highly praised the brotherly relations between Armenia and Cyprus,” Member of Parliament Hayk Konjoryan, the parliament majority leader and Chair of the Armenia-Cyprus Inter-parliamentary cooperation commission said in a statement.

“We mutually underscored the high level of inter-parliamentary cooperation and discussed new prospects of deepening the cooperation. We raised the issue of Azerbaijan’s illegal installation of a checkpoint on Lachin Corridor. We discussed the ongoing peace process taking place with Azerbaijan, the existing challenges and ways for resolving them,” Konjoryan said.

Peskov Says Russia,
Armenia, Azerbaijan
Negotiation Is a Must

MOSCOW (news.am) — There are no other legal bases for the settlement of the situation in Karabakh apart from the tripartite arrangements between Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, said Dmitry Peskov, press secretary of the Russian president on May 1, RIA Novosti reported.

“The solution of the existing problems between the two countries [i.e., Armenia and Azerbaijan] and the possible development of some joint actions and steps aimed at easing the tension in the region are, first of all, of course, possible on the basis of the tripartite documents that were signed together with Russia. There are no other legal grounds yet that would contribute to the settlement [of the situation in Karabakh],” said Peskov.

He noted that these tripartite documents still have no alternative.

Schiff Spearheads U.S.
House Opposition to Rifle
Sales to Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON — Seventeen U.S. Representatives have joined with Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA) in calling on the Biden Administration’s Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo to block a proposed license allowing the sale of high-powered American-made rifles to Azerbaijan, an exercise of legislative oversight strongly backed by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

The Schiff letter follows a similar letter sent last month by U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ).

Joining Rep. Schiff in co-signing this letter were Representatives Tony Cardenas (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Jim Costa (D-CA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Seth Magaziner (D-RI), James McGovern (D-MA), Grace Meng (D-NY), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Katie Porter (D-CA), Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), Haley Stevens (D-MI), Eric Swalwell (D-CA), and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI).

April 24 Commemorated in Sydney,
Australia, with Aram Sargsyan

By Vahe Artinian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

SYDNEY, Australia — This year three organizations decided to invite from Armenia to Sydney, Aram Sargsyan, leader of the Hanrapetutyun [Republic] political party. Sargsyan served in the Armenian armed forces during the first Karabagh war to free Artsakh and later was prime minister for two years. His brother Vazken Sargsyan was the late defense minister.

Two main events took place in addition to many political and community meetings and consultations discussing current issues of Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora. On April 21, the remembrance of the 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, organized by the Social Democratic Hunchakian Party, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) took place at the hall of St. Anne’s Anglican Church. The concert hall was full of community leaders and the public when the cultural program was presented. The opening address was delivered by Zani Nazarian Okgian.

The keynote address by Sargsyan was powerful and full of current facts and data concerning the motherland. He explained the role of Iran and other neighbors of Armenia. He explained why through examples that the West’s solutions, and alliances, especially with France, Germany and the US, are better proposals for positive outcomes. Meanwhile, Russia can stay as Armenia’s long-term ally and friend, as more than two million Armenians live there and Armenia has the largest amount of trade and arms deals with it. Having new alliances, Sargsyan explained, should not prevent Armenia from continuing its old ones if desirable.

As for a resolution to Artsakh’s problems, he reiterated the example of Kosovo. He drew the similarities, including how the same political principles apply. Hence it can gain an independent status, guaran-



Nver Mnatsakanyan, left, with Aram Sargsyan

teeing its population’s safety and freedom.

He explained how and why Armenia exists after continuous wars and massacres by using its geography. He continued, exclaiming, look at the topography in Artsakh. It’s all mountains. Hence the Armenians were able to use this to their advantage. Lastly, Sargsyan reassured the audience of Armenia’s economic viability by listing resources of high value, e.g. water and minerals.

The audience was empowered by this talk and appeared confident of a better future during an extremely turbulent situation, mainly due to new world orders and conflicts where Armenia and Artsakh find themselves at the cross roads.

The commemoration finished with a patriotic speech and prayer by Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Australia and New Zealand.

On Saturday, April 22, the AGBU Alexander Manoogian Cultural Centre’s Alexander Hall was packed with a full audience. Arek

Yapoudjian opened the event and then Nver Mnatsakanyan, an Armenian television commentator and journalist, moderated.

Sargsyan started by highlighting the current situation, especially the Azerbaija-



Abp. Haigazoun Najarian, center

ni post of the night before then, and then asked the audience to ask questions. For three hours straight, the audience was engaged and could have even continued further, but the event had reached its closure with a reception, which went on until late evening.

During his visit, Sargsyan met political and church leaders, and attended a special requiem service at the Armenian Apostolic Church, where a special prayer was dedicated to Sargsyan’s late brother Vazken Sargsyan (“Sbarabed” or commander-in-chief of the army).

Meetings with the councils of Ryde and Willoughby and their mayors were of significance to explain current issues specifically in Artsakh, which is under siege by Azerbaijan.



Organizing committee with guests at the AGBU cultural center

Armenian Airline Barred From Turkish Airspace

AIRSPACE, from page 1

reason related to any aviation activity that would lead to this decision,” Ananyan added.

Flights operated from Armenia to Europe have few alternatives to transit through Turkish airspace because of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war as a result of which much of the region’s airspace is declared a no-fly zone.

But Flyone Armenia’s official has pledged that the airline will carry out all its flights as scheduled in cooperation with European partners and that no ticket holder will face

any problems. He did not elaborate.

Flyone Armenia, which was founded in 2021 and operates flights to several destinations in Europe and Russia, since last year has also operated Yerevan-Istanbul-Yerevan flights. Meanwhile, the Turkish Pegasus airline has been operating Istanbul-Yerevan-Istanbul flights.

The resumption of air flights between Armenia and Turkey in 2022 was touted by both countries as progress in their efforts to achieve normalization after decades of feud over historical issues.

Flyone Armenia said it assumed that the ban concerned transit through Turkish airspace and not flights to and from Istanbul, as the Turkish side has not informed the Armenian airline about any obstacles to these flights yet.

Armenia’s General Department of Civil Aviation did not comment immediately on whether the Turkish ban applies only to Flyone Armenia or in general to all Armenia-registered airlines. It promised to answer questions on May 2 when its officials return to work after the holiday.



INTERNATIONAL

First *Khachkars* in Mexico Inaugurated for the 108th Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

By Carlos Antaramián

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PANINDICUARO, Mexico — On Saturday, April 22, as part of the 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, three *khachkars* [cross stones] were inaugurated in a roundabout (traffic circle) in the town of Panindícuaro, in the state of Michoacán, located in central-western Mexico.

Under the patronage of Jack and Diamandula Sahakian and their family, the *khachkars* were made in the town of Tlalpujahua — also in the state of Michoacán — by the master craftsman Rigoberto, and starting on this Saturday, they have become the first to be exhibited in a public space in Mexico.

The Armenian community in Michoacán is very small. In addition to the Sahakian family in Morelia, the state capital, there is also part of the Antaramián family in that city, the family of Alain Avakian (Armenians from France) in Uruapan, and the family of the Ethiopian-born Armenian painter Vatche Guevdjelian in Erongaricuaro, near Lake Pátzcuaro. So in this state, the Armenians do not exceed 15 people in number. The vast majority of Armenians living in Mexico are in Mexico City, Tijuana, Acapulco and Querétaro, as well as scattered throughout the rest of the country, always in very small numbers. We can estimate that today there are between 2,500 and 3,000 Mexican Armenians, but none

live in Panindícuaro.

Then why in this town were three *khachkars* installed? Jack Sahakian tells me that the reason has been his friendship with Mayor Manuel López Menéndez, who has invited him to invest in the town, which has around 18,000 inhabitants. And also because he has been coming to this place for many years and has always enjoyed its climate and the warmth of its people. In addition, his father Sarkis Sahakian (who died in August 2016) accompanied him when he made business visits and sat in the Central Plaza where he observed the broken church clock. Sarkis remarked that he would provide the necessary support for the clock to be fixed — a project that, despite the fact that Sarkis is no longer with us, his son will carry out very soon. Also, the *khachkars* are like the Armenians: they settle in remote places that seem isolated from the rest of the world, but they always carry the Armenian culture in their hearts, like the symbols of eternity that the cross stones have at their center.

Indeed, a part of the history of the Armenian diaspora has been the construction of churches or *khachkars* in places that might seem far from everything. In Swaziland, Singapore, Madras (India), Dhaka (Bangladesh) and Gherla (Romania), among many other places, Armenian churches testify to the Armenian presence. *Khachkars* also accompany the dispersion of the Armenians. There are 30 *khachkars* in France, others



Very Rev. Fr. Sasoon Krikor Zumrookhdian blessing the *khachkars*, “Glorieta del Jachkar” [*Khachkar* Traffic Circle], Panindícuaro, Michoacán, April 22, 2023 (photo Carlos Antaramián)

in Madrid, Sydney, various cities in South America, and in many other places around the world. Now we can add to this list three beautiful *khachkars* in Panindícuaro, the first ones in Mexico.

The inauguration was attended by the ambassador of Armenia in Mexico, Armella Shakaryan, by Very Rev. Sasoon Krikor Zumrookhdian, representing the Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Consul of Armenia in Michoacán Jack Sahakian, the federal deputy for the state of Michoacán Berenice Juárez Navarrete, the president of the World Lebanese Cultural Union Nabih Chartouni, the mayor of Panindícuaro Manuel López Menéndez and his council, in addition to General Alfredo Ortega Reyes, Secretary of Public Security in the area.

Before blessing the *khachkars*, Father Sasoon asked the nearly 150 attendees, students from various schools and the general public, to see these cross stones as a “living monument to the saints of the 1915 Armenian Genocide.” It is important to note that in 2015 the martyrs of the genocide were sanctified, so now the Armenian Church considers that those massacred during the genocide no longer need requiem masses but are already contemplating the grace of God, for which they already can intercede for the faithful. This was made known by

telling the audience that “these million and a half saints will intercede for you on Judgment Day,” and the *khachkars* “will be silent witnesses for centuries and an undeniable sign that the Armenians live and prosper in these lands.”

A few steps from the *glorieta* (traffic circle), and as an anticipatory symbol, there is a funeral agency with the name of San Judas Tadeo (Sourp Tadevos or Saint Thaddeus), the evangelizer of Armenia. The cult of this saint was introduced in Mexico in the '40s of the 20th century, and since then it has been expanding, perhaps becoming one of the most popular saints in the country. This is a saint representing the union of Mexico and Armenia.

Panindícuaro is a small town with a high migration rate, however, it has ample potential to become an axis of industrial and commercial development. It is located at the foot of a highway that connects Mexico City with Guadalajara. Less than an hour away is the area of Tequila, producer of the most famous Mexican elixir. Also an hour away, towards the town of Uruapan, is the most important area in the world in avocado production. Strawberries are produced in this region, and Michoacán is the main producer in the country, so perhaps in a few years the town will attract large investors. What is undeniable is that it is already on the map of the Armenian diaspora.



Very Rev. Fr. Sasoon Krikor Zumrookhdian with some students from public schools in Panindícuaro, (photo Carlos Antaramián)

Azerbaijani ‘Activists’ End Blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh

Azerbaijani self-proclaimed environmental activists on May 1 ended their 4-1/2 month demonstration on the Lachin-Stepanakert road, thus lifting the blockade of the road which connects Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

The blockade became redundant after Azerbaijan installed a border checkpoint at the opposite end of the road on April 23.

Azerbaijani media reported on April 28 that the activists decided to temporarily suspend their demonstration following a meeting with Aydin Karimov, the Azerbaijani president’s special representative in Shusha. Karimov reportedly asked them to disperse since “a new situation has emerged” following the checkpoint’s

installation.

The blockade began on December 12, when the self-styled environmental activists began a sit-in protest on the road near Shusha, a town in the Azerbaijan-controlled part of Nagorno-Karabakh. The activists, whose composition changed regularly over the course of the blockade, said they were protesting against the exploitation of natural resources in Nagorno-Karabakh by the de facto Armenian authorities and their transportation to Armenia.

Though the Azerbaijani government claimed it had no links to the protesters, the blockade was clearly part of a broader strategy to make life difficult for the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. It pre-

vented most Armenians from being able to travel in or out of the territory and greatly reduced the flow of goods there, driving up prices.

Neither the blockade nor the establishment of the checkpoint were impeded by the Russian peacekeepers, who are supposed to be the sole providers of security on the road under the peace deal that ended the 2020 Second Karabakh War.

A few hours after announcing their decision, the eco-activists released a statement praising the checkpoint. “This decisive step aimed at preventing illegality in the territories of Azerbaijan means that the participants of the demonstration have partially achieved their goals.”

It went on: “We declare that our de-

mands that the command of the peacekeeping contingent stop the illegal exploitation of mineral deposits in the territories of Azerbaijan where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily located and ensure the monitoring of environmental and other consequences remain in effect, and that if these demands are not met, we reserve the right to resume the demonstration!”

Meanwhile, Azerbaijani media published footage from the newly established checkpoint at the border, which purports to show Armenian citizens going through passport control and having their vehicles examined.

(This article originally appeared on the website eurasianet.org on May 1.)



Community News

UC Berkeley Students Commemorate Genocide with Week Of Protests, Events

BERKELEY, Calif. — The Armenian Student Association at the University of California, Berkeley, hosted a Candlelight Vigil on April 24, 2023, to mark the beginning of Armenian Genocide Awareness Week. The event, open to the public, raised awareness about the Armenian Genocide, honored its victims, and educated about Armenian history and culture.

During the Candlelight Vigil, Cal students came together to commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. They gathered around a monument built by ASA students, learning about its significance, and imbuing it with their personal touch. “It was beautiful to see our unity, especially when tying red, blue, and orange ribbons to the Apricot tree. The event reminded us of the importance of sharing knowledge and raising awareness about a devastating historical event that is rarely discussed,” shared Julia Sa-



Tying tricolor ribbons to a tree during the demonstration at Berkeley

rieva, Vice President of ASA. “Genocide commemoration is more than a history lesson,” continued Nane Petsoyan, Cultural Chair of ASA. “It’s a powerful way to engage people across generations in understanding the sanctity of human rights, the enormity of crimes, and the importance of preventing future atrocities.”

Following the Candlelight Vigil, ASA hosted a Traditional Armenian Dance Workshop on Tuesday, April 25, led by Zartonk Dance Team Lead Sona Asatryan. On Wednesday, April 26, they held a silent protest where participants blocked the Sather Gate (a prominent UC Berkeley landmark) for 30 minutes with posters and red tape over their mouths. Finally, on Thursday, April 27, the week concluded with a fundraiser featuring pre-ordered Armenian pastries, the proceeds of which will be donated to the Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund.



Young protestors at UC Berkeley



Philip Ketchian with an old CYSCA poster (Ken Martin Photo)

CYSCA Offers a Look Back at Its History

By Kenneth Martin
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Continuing their 35th anniversary of the founding of the Cambridge -Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA), former and current members of the Board of Directors, met at the main building of the Cambridge Public Library on April 18, in the early evening.

The drawing element of the night was a small exhibit of ephemera, paraphernalia, and objects collected by individuals and members of delegations over the years. Other gifts by friends and the government of the Armenian Republic were given by exchange students from Armenian and other delegates to Cambridge from Yerevan. The exhibit was located at the library entrance, on the second floor, and in the basement meeting room for the event.

During the presentations and reminiscences the speaker showed several objects associated with their past work for the organization. Former board member Philip Ketchian brought in a multi lingual poster from an environmental program that he organized during his days in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Another board member Nancy Kalajian, a well-known personality and teacher (and former long-time correspondent for the *Mirror-Spectator*) worked on issues of conflict resolution during her teaching life showed some artwork created by Armenian youth during a project that she created and ran for CYSCA. She offered many insights into comparative education system in Armenian and the United States.



Nancy Kalajian (Ken Martin Photo)

An early board member, Ellen Mass brought in her much cherished scrap book full of articles, photographs and correspondence collected over the years, for just a time as the present, to display the importance and breadth of work carried out in the name of world peace between citizens of two great cities and peoples, that was enjoyed by all.

Ketchian, in his presentation mentioned the Board of Directors who were present and that there were other board and general members who were not. Some of those others included Jeb Brugman the former Cambridge Peace Commissioner, Mayor Frank Duehay, Suzy Pearce, translator and facilitator Jackie Abramian, Eva Medzorian, Methodist Rev. Wesley Williams, Veteran Joe Tichanauk, Edward Casey, David Wiley, and School Committee member Jane Sullivan.

President of the Board Roxanne Etmekjian and Vice-President Isabelle Hamel spoke about current and upcoming activities and plans for CYSCA including re-invigoration of the oldest continually operating Sister City Association in Cambridge. The cordial gathering continued upon the meeting adjournment enjoying the good company and delicious Armenian meze treats and a final viewing of the exhibit.

LA Councilmember Nithya Raman Issues Statement On Anniversary Of Armenian Genocide

LOS ANGELES – Councilmember Nithya Raman last week delivered a speech at the annual Armenian Genocide Rally and Commemoration hosted by the Armenian Genocide Committee (AGC), and issued the following statement after the event.

“This year marks the 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide — one of the darkest chapters in human history. Between 1915 and 1923, more than 1.5 million Armenians were systematically massacred and deported from their ancestral lands by the Ottoman Empire. The survivors faced unspeakable horrors and hardships, but demonstrated remarkable resilience and courage. They rebuilt their lives and communities in cities like Los Angeles, finding refuge here to preserve their rich culture and heritage.

“I also stand in solidarity with the Armenians of Artsakh, who have been subjected to a nearly five-month-long brutal blockade by Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey. 120,000 Armenians — including 30,000 chil-



Nithya Raman

dren and 20,000 seniors — are under the threat of violence and expulsion from their ancestral homelands. I join my Armenian brothers and sisters in urging the leadership of the United States to use all available tools to force Azerbaijan to end the illegal blockade and its hostility towards Artsakh and Armenia.

“The Armenian Genocide is not only a tragedy of the past but also a lesson for the present and the future. It reminds us of the dangers of hatred, intolerance, and indifference and the need to stand up against any form of oppression and violence. It also compels us to honor the memory of those who perished by demanding justice and reparations. by preventing future ethnic cleansing and genocide, we will bring true meaning to the phrase ‘never again.’”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Detroit Churches Commemorate Genocide Anniversary

DETROIT — On the evening of Monday, April 24, a Service in Honor of the Sanctified Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide was held at St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Dearborn.

This 108th Anniversary Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide was organized by the Armenian Churches of Greater Detroit Genocide Commemoration Committee.

The four churches represented are: St. John Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Detroit (Southfield, MI) St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church (Dearborn, MI) St. Vartan Armenian Catholic Church (Bloomfield Hills, MI) Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit (Southfield, MI)

The service included clergy and deacons of all the above churches, including the pastors of each church. The service was led by Fr. Aren Jebejian (St. John Armenian Church). The guest homilist was Bishop Seraphim of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana.

— photos and text by Harry Kezelian



Fr. Aren Jebejian, pastor of St John Church in Southfield



Bishop Seraphim of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana

Southeast Wisconsin Armenians Commemorate Martyrs' Day

By David Luhrsens

MILWAUKEE — For many decades, the four Armenian churches of Southeast Wisconsin jointly observed Martyrs Day on April 24 with requiem services (prior to 2015) and other commemorations. This year, the four churches marked Martyrs Day by celebrating Sunday liturgy together on April 23 at St. John the Baptist Armenian Church, Milwaukee. Priests, deacons, sub deacons, choir members and the faithful from all four communities filled the St. John sanctuary.

April 23 is Green Sunday on the Armenian Church calendar with green as the color of life and promise, the color of spring-time symbolizing the Resurrection. As Rev. Fr. Daron Stepanian (St. Hagop Armenian Church, Racine) emphasized in his homily, resurrection has been a perennial theme in

Armenian history. From the Battle of Avaryr through the shifting borders of empire and the shifting fortunes of foreign occupation, culminating in the Armenian Genocide but continuing today with the Azeri blockade of Artsakh, Armenians have been tested and forced to defend heritage and faith. Armenians have maintained independence as a people even during periods when there was no independent Armenian state. The Armenian Church, he stressed, has been the pillar of strength throughout this long history.

Like the Phoenix, Armenia has risen from the ashes many times. Fr. Stepanian added that Martyrs Day is not only a time to remember the 1.5 million Armenians who perished during the Genocide but also calls us to continue the campaign for justice and to build strong communities in Ar-

menia, Artsakh and the Diaspora.

At the conclusion of the joint liturgy, Fr. Stepanian, Rev. Fr. Guregh Hambardzumyan (St. John the Baptist, Milwaukee), Rev. Fr. Avedis Kalayjian (St. Mesrob Armenian Church, Racine) and Rev. Fr. Sahag Kashian (Holy Resurrection Armenian Church, South Milwaukee) performed the Prayers of Intercession for the martyrs of

the Genocide. A memorial wreath was laid at the khachkar in the Martyrs of Armenian Genocide Memorial Courtyard outside St. John. Afterward, members of the four Armenian communities of Southeast Wisconsin gathered in St. John's Culture Hall for a *madagh* dinner in memory of Martyrs Day.



The members of the clergy in Wisconsin commemorating Martyrs' Day

Armenian Memorial Church To Hold Annual Fair

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown will hold its Annual Fair on Friday, May 19, from 5 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, May 20, from 12 to 7 p.m. (rain or shine). Both days, the church will be serving traditional Armenian foods and desserts. The selection will also include meatless meals. Visitors may enjoy eating at tables under the tent or may purchase take-out orders if they prefer.

The entire fair features an Armenian delicacies table with a variety of gourmet specialties. The women of the Church who are famous for their fine cooking have been

preparing the Armenian delicacies including paklava, kadayif, cheoreg, koufte, eetch, beureg and many other baked specialties.

This fundraiser is in its 34th year and is the Church's largest. However, each year the Church designates 10 percent of the proceeds to a worthy charity. This year funds will go to Syria Earthquake Relief through the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA).

The Armenian Memorial Church is located at 32 Bigelow Avenue in Watertown. Admission is free, and the public is invited. The Church is wheelchair accessible.



ARMENIAN NURSING AND REHABILITATION CENTER

Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center has been providing quality and comprehensive care to seniors within our community for over 100 years! Our outstanding team of professionals provide person-centered, short-term rehabilitation and long-term care, while maintaining a culture where our staff is not just valued, but rewarded. Join us in our mission to honor the rich history, and generosity of spirit of the Armenian community, by providing compassionate care in our 83-bed skilled nursing center, located on a beautiful three-acre lot in Jamaica Plain.

We are currently seeking qualified RN, LPN, CNA, and Dietary Aides to join our team. If you are interested, visit our careers page at awwainc.org, or contact our recruitment specialist, Luerissa, at lpillips@legacylifecare.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Acemoglu Lectures at Holy Trinity, Receives Unique Ring from Hachikian

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Jeweler Arto Hachikian donated a ring he specially made to Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professor Daron Acemoglu on April 16 at



Arto Hachikian, seated, surrounded by family members and with Dr. Daron Acemoglu standing to his left

the Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall of the Holy Trinity Armenian Church.

Acemoglu, widely considered as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Economics, first gave a lecture on “Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges for the World and Armenia” as part of the Trinity Talks speaker series prior to the gift ceremony.

Acemoglu’s talk focused on various aspects of AI and only briefly specifically mentioned Armenia at the end. He noted that Armenia underperformed terribly over the last several decades economically, though it had been the human capital hub of the Soviet Union. That was lost but he suggested that if Armenia is able to retain its workforce, with higher quality investments in digital technology and AI along with a greater understanding of how these technologies are going to be used in the future, it may still be in a good position.

At the end of the event, Anais Jewelry owner Hachikian, spoke briefly about his own life. Born in the Armenian village of Gigi in Turkey in 1960, he soon moved with his family to Istanbul and after going to school, learned jewelry as a trade. At 17 years old, he got a passport and went to Greece, and after three years, decided to go to the US via Canada. He arrived in New York.

Everywhere he went, he saw that Armenians helped him and so he vowed when he would be able, he would help them too. He met his wife in New York, and later moved to Boston, where he opened his jewelry store. He had made special rings as gifts for people in the past, and when he learned about Acemoglu, he thought that he decided to make a unique ring with Armenian symbolism for him to acknowledge his pride. Acemoglu accepted the ring with gratitude.

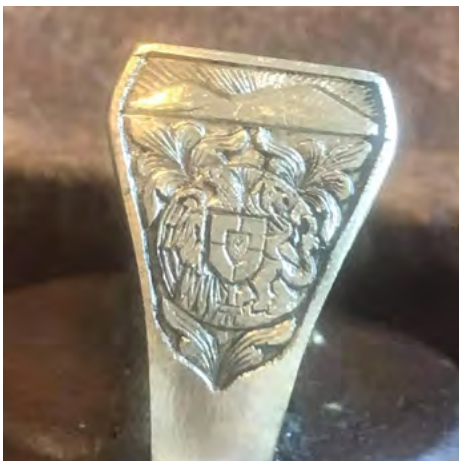
To watch Hachikian’s talk and the presentation of the ring on YouTube, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUh-vzdbcUjI>. To watch Acemoglu’s speech, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WOZboJF5dM>.



Daron Acemoglu at podium, with Arto Hachikian and Fr. Vasken Kouzouian



A view of the ring Arto Hachikian crafted for Daron Acemoglu



Tekeyan Cultural Association
of the United States and Canada
PRESENTS

VEM ENSEMBLE

Movses Pogossian, violin; Ela Kodzas, violin; Damon Zavala, viola; Niall Taró Ferguson, cello

<p>MAY 9, 2023 DETROIT</p> <p>St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall 22001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield, MI Cospponsored by the Cultural Society of Armenians from Istanbul, and AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School 7 pm; for more info call 248 595 6159</p>	<p>MAY 11, 2023 BOSTON</p> <p>Cospponsored with Holy Trinity Armenian Church 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA For info call 617-924-4455 7:30 pm</p>	<p>MAY 13, 2023 MONTREAL</p> <p>Tekeyan Center 825 Manogian St. Saint-Laurent, Canada \$20/ticket, call 514 747-6680 8 pm</p>
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Sargsyan is an expert
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researcher and author. He
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State University, American
University of Armenia and
the Fletcher School of Law
and Diplomacy at Tufts
University. He is a founder
of the Armenian Center
for American Studies, a
research center based in
Yerevan.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Yale Univ. Students Commemorate Armenian Genocide

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — The Yale Armenian Network (YAN) held an outdoor candlelight vigil on the 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on Monday, April 24 at 7:30 p.m. outside Sterling Memorial Library at Yale.

Each year on the date considered to be the beginning of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, YAN conducts a commemoration ceremony to honor the memory of the one and a half million victims of the Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman government as well as to remember the survivors.

YAN is a student led association that fosters and promotes Armenian culture and heritage to the Yale community. Its mission is to connect all Armenians at Yale in friendship and support. YAN aims to foster awareness of the culture of Armenia and the issues faced by Armenians today.

Mariam Alaverdian and Pateel Jivalagian, co-presidents of YAN jointly organized the commemoration. Alaverdian is a graduating senior at Yale College pursuing a BS in applied mathematics and Jivalagian is a graduating master's student at the Yale School of Public Health. The event was made possible with the help of the YAN Genocide Commemoration Committee. Alaverdian and Jivalagian stated "As descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors, we recognize our duty to arrange a commemorative event for the Yale community in honor of the 1.5 million lives tragically lost and to acknowledge the lasting trauma endured by numerous survivors. Our objective for this event was not only to pay tribute to those affected but also to educate the public by sharing the personal stories of our members and shedding light on the atrocities committed against our nation."

The Rev. Archpriest Untzag Nalbandian, pastor of the Armenian Church of the Holy Ascension in Trumbull started off the commemoration with a prayer service. Kit Kallian of Milford, a subdeacon at Armenian Church of the Holy Ascension assisted in the service. Before his prayer service Nalbandian addressed the students saying "I appreciate that you, the Armenian students at Yale University organized this important event to remember our victims and also to educate others about the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Unfortunately, 108 years later we see how Armenian Artsakh is under blockade by the Azeri Government and the 120,000 Armenians living there cannot even go to Arme-



The prayer service at the Yale commemoration

nia, let alone any part of the world. And this is happening today in front of the eyes of the civilized world. We must raise our voice to prevent future Genocides."

A current blockade of the Lachin corridor, Artsakh's only link to Armenia, began on December 11, 2022, threatening the very existence of those ethnic Armenians who are thus unable to access, water, food, medicine and fuel.

A number of members of YAN commented on the meaning of the Genocide and the obligation never to forget through musical and poetic renditions as well as by heartfelt comments of remembrance.

Harry and Janice Mazadoorian of Kensington also attended the event. He is an alumnus of Yale College and Yale Law school. They stated that they were moved to hear the penetrating comments of so many of the young people in attendance and enormously proud of their efforts to maintain the resilience of the Armenian spirit.

Dr. David J. Simon, Assistant Dean for Graduate Education at Yale's Jackson School of Global Affairs and Director, Yale Genocide Studies Program also attended the event. He stated "For me, attending the event was a moving reminder of why commemoration matters. The Yale Armenian community expressed grief in the pain and loss endured by their ancestors, lamented the long legacy of pain and sorrow that later generations feel, and demonstrated the resilience of Armenians in the world today. The

last point is especially poignant, given that genocide is essentially an effort to wipe out not just a large collection of individuals but the group to which they belong and the identity to which they subscribe. A moving expression of community such as last night's event is a powerful way to show that for all of the pain it caused, those genocidal efforts ultimately failed to attain the worst of their goals."

Dr. Gregory Nikogosyan, Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry Fellow at the School of Medicine, stated that "The Armenian Genocide commemoration is our continued pledge to never forget the atrocities that occurred 108 years ago. To this day, the Armenian Genocide is not recognized by the Republic of Turkey. Not holding others accountable for crimes against humanity has consequences. We should reflect that today Armenians are continuing to face atrocities and denial of the right to life in their indigenous lands of Artsakh. Today, here at Yale, we do not forget."

Karen Agaronyan, Post-doctoral Associate at Yale University/Howard Hughes Medical Institute observed "As I was growing up, I often pondered why Armenians faced so much hatred and denied their right to exist leading to genocide. Although I do not have a definitive answer to this question, I strongly believe that it's crucial to remember our past. Ignorance towards history can lead to the perpetuation of terrible atrocities, while knowledge and memory can help prevent such tragedies from happening again."



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OBITUARY

Dr. Vartkes Najarian
Founder of Medical Outreach

GLENDAL — On Saturday, April 15, 2023, Dr. Vartkes Najarian passed away peacefully at his home, surrounded by his wife, children, their spouses, grandchildren and great-grandchild.

Vartkes Najarian was born April 4, 1930 in Kessab, Syria to Hagop, an evangelical minister, and Rebecca. They had five children: Sirvart, Ardashes, Vartkes, Vasken and Vrej.



At an early age, the family moved to Beirut, Lebanon. After attending the Armenian Evangelical High School, he graduated from the American University of Beirut (AUB) and received a scholarship to enter the AUB Medical School. In his spare time, he worked as a lifeguard on the Mediterranean beach and was a star athlete and national rowing champion.

He graduated from medical school in 1957, and came to the United States to continue his medical training. After an in-

ternship in New Jersey, he went to Chicago, where he trained under the famous Dr. Hampar Kelikian. In 1958, while in Chicago, he married Mary Kevorkian, a registered nurse and AUB graduate.

He completed his orthopedic training at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, where he settled down and raised four children: Ara, Armen, Raffi and Maro. In the 20 years he spent in Cleveland, he served the community by volunteering as the sports team physician for Hawken School and the West Geauga School District.

In 1980, the family moved to California to be closer to his extended family and the flourishing Armenian community. He started his private orthopedic practice in Glendale where he pioneered the first weekly successful health program on Armenian television.

His first visit to Soviet Armenia in 1984 sparked a burning passion to help his people. Armenia's health care system at the time was that of a third world country. He broke down political barriers in order to bring Armenia up to modern medical standards. He was the

first doctor in the entire Soviet Union to perform arthroscopic surgery. In addition to bringing the valuable arthroscopic surgical equipment, he brought Armenian orthopedic surgeons to the United States to strengthen their training.

Even beyond orthopedics, Dr. Najarian helped to develop modern eye care centers in Yerevan. The shortage of medicine in Armenian compelled Dr. Najarian to create the first aspirin tablet manufacturing facility in Yerevan.

When the 1988 earthquake rocked Armenia, Dr. Najarian was asked to be on the first US State Department emergency medical response team to assess the needs. This was the first time since the start of the Cold War that a US military plane was permitted to land in the Soviet Union. He established a humanitarian organization, Medical Outreach for Armenians, to facilitate his charitable projects.

Dr. Najarian with the help of the Armenian community, arranged for 120 children, who had lost limbs in the earthquake, to obtain necessary surgical treatment and prosthetics in prominent Los Angeles hospitals. That same year, he sent millions of dollars of medical supplies, filling over 50 containers to Yerevan.

In 1991, during the fierce fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan, then Minister of Defense Serge Sargsyan stated that during the war "our soldiers wanted 2 things: medical care and a combat communication system. In those 2 areas, the Najarians played the major role."

The radio systems the soldiers used were very heavy, obsolete, and unable to be used properly to direct troops. Dr. Najarian and his friends in Los Angeles purchased and delivered Alyenko radio systems to the Army which was crucial in turning the tide to victory for the Armenian and Artsakh forces.

Dr. Najarian had to leave his private medical practice in Los Angeles so he could spend more time in Artsakh attending to the troops. It was there that he would perform surgeries by candlelight in trench-

es and in bombed out basements, under the shelling of bombs and bullets.

After the war, Dr. Najarian, along with Medical Outreach, renovated 11 floors of the Military Hospital in Yerevan. The Najarians spent 8 years making a once run-down building into a modern and well-equipped military hospital. In Artsakh, Dr. Najarian renovated a 30-bed trauma center in Stepanakert. When not in Armenia and Artsakh he was always sending more medical supplies and assistance. Because of his sacrifice and heroic acts, Defense Minister Vasken Sarkissian honored Dr. Najarian with the rank of colonel in the Armenian Army.

Among the numerous awards he received are the Vachagan Humanitarian Medal from Artsakh, the Soviet Medal of Honor, the Nelle Reagan Award, the Fridtjof Nansen Award from the Russian International Humanitarian Organization, the Ellis Island Medal of Freedom and Presidential Medal of Honors from Artsakh presidents Arkady Ghukasyan and Bako Sahakyan and Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan. He received letters of commendation from Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton.

Vartkes is survived by his wife Mary of 64 years, his children Ara (Palmira), Armen (Naira), Raffi (Arda) and Maro (Stephan Yacoubian), grandchildren Vartkes, Mary, Alexander (Anna Tutundjian), Christopher, Shant, Vahe, Daniel, Daron and Elizabeth, and great-grandson Edward.

Funeral services were held at the United Armenian Congregational Church in Los Angeles on Wednesday, May 3.

Alex Karnig Kalaydjian
Dedicated to St. James Church, Family

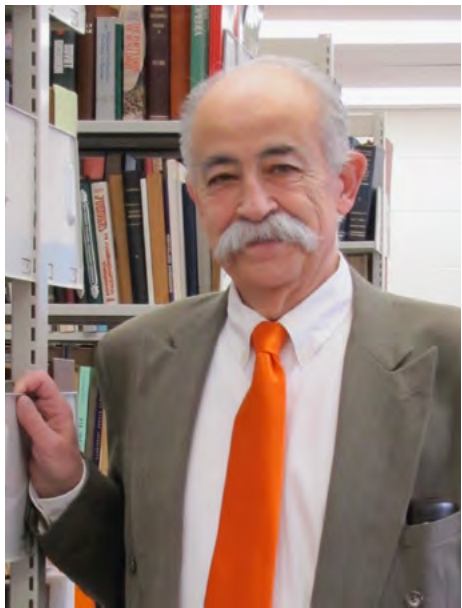
WOBURN, Mass. — Alex Karnig Kalaydjian of Woburn passed away peacefully on April 28, 2023 after a brief illness, he was 79.

Alex was born in the Old City of Jerusalem on October 7, 1943 to the late Karnig and Mary (Chinchinian) Kalaydjian.

He was educated in Jerusalem in the St. Tarkmanchatz School and AGBU Melkonian Educational Institute.

After completing his education, Alex began working at the printing press of the St. James Monastery as a typesetter. He was also responsible for copying old manuscripts and rare publications. He was an instrumental part of establishing the printing press in the Theological Seminary and was later named assistant dean of the seminary.

He was ordained a deacon in Jerusalem by the late Patriarch Yeghishe Derderian in 1980.



In 1985, Alex and his parents immigrated to America.

Alex began working as executive secretary of the local AGBU Watertown Center. There he met the love of his life, Annie Yetimian, and the couple were married a short time later. Alex worked in the banking industry for more than 20 years, most recently at Belmont Savings Bank.

Alex had a great passion and expert knowledge of the Armenian language. He shared this passion and expertise with hundreds of students over the years. Together with his wife, Annie, he taught as part of the Mesrob Mashdotz Adult Armenian School and St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Saturday school at St. James Armenian Church. Alex also assisted daily at St. James with translations of various documents from Armenian to English and English to Armenian. He was the librarian of the Kalaydjian library at St. James which was built in memory of his late brother, Ara Kalaydjian, who was the former chief editor of the *Armenian Mirror Spectator*.

In December 2022, Alex, his wife, An-

nie, and other Armenian language school teachers were the recipients of the St. James Armenian Church 91st Name Day Banquet for their decades of teaching the Armenian language, history, and culture. His presence and knowledge will be missed by everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him.

In addition to his wife, he leaves son Nareg Alex Kalaydjian of Woburn; brothers Arek Kalaydjian and his wife Lisa of North Andover, Dr. Antranig Kalaydjian and his wife Rosie of Germany; sisters-in-law to Mayda Yetimian of Woburn and Shoushan Kalaydjian of Belmont. He leaves his nieces, Kerstin and Ruth Kalaydjian, his nephew Dr. Antranig Kalaydjian his wife Talin. He was great-uncle to Areni Kalaydjian. He is also survived by many additional cousins, relatives, and friends. He was predeceased by his brother Ara Kalaydjian.

Funeral Services were held at St. James Armenian Church on May 2. Interment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery in Watertown. Expressions of sympathy may be made in his memory to St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472.

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OBITUARY

Solemn Funeral Services Held For Edmond Azadian in Detroit

AZADIAN, from page 1

Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, came from New York to preside over the services conducted, while Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Canada, traveled from Montreal to also participate.

During the Friday evening wake, Fr. Aren Jebejian, pastor of St. John Armenian Church, introduced all the clergymen, including the married priests present, Fr. Garabed Kochakian and Assistant Pastor Fr. Armash Bagdasarian, before speaking about the role that Azadian had played in his own education and life, and praising him as a singular personality of the diaspora — as an Armenian patriot and intellectual. He then invited Bishop Hovakimyan to read the letter of condolences in the Armenian language sent by Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

The wake was an opportunity to see Azadian one last time in his open casket



Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan

adorned with the flags of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) and the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada, two organizations which Azadian had served for decades as a leader and ideologue.

The next day, a large crowd was present at the church for the noon service, including family and many members of the Detroit Armenian community, as well as visitors who came specially for the funeral from Armenia, Europe and Canada. The Komitas Choir, led by Deacon Rubik Mailian and organist Arshaluys Gharibian, participated soulfully in the service. Fr. Kochaki-



eulogy both in Armenian and English.

Fr. Andon Atamian from the local St. Vartan Armenian Catholic Church had come also to pay his respects.

After the church service ended many



Fr. Aren Jebejian

went to the cemetery, where the traditional burial service with the participation of all the clergy took place prior to the burial. ADL members present sang the party's hymn and renewed their party oaths at this sad occasion.

A memorial luncheon was offered at the

of Michigan were ADL Supreme Council Chairman Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian of London, ADL leader Sergio Nahabetian of Buenos Aires and veteran ADL member and noted industrialist Rouben Terzian of Las Vegas, as well as TCA leaders from Los Angeles, New Jersey, Texas, Montreal and Boston.

A PowerPoint containing several hundred photographs of Azadian at various times and settings was projected on a large screen during the meal, and violinist Dr. Henrik Karapetyan played *Nocturne* from the *Masquerade Suite* by Aram Khachaturian and a few Komitas miniatures.

Elena Martinez-Azadian, the great-niece of Edmond Azadian, ably served as master of ceremonies, interspersing personal comments and anecdotes with the introduction of the various speakers. Newly elected TCA Central Board member Ara Tcholakian spoke with great feeling on behalf of the family about his uncle, focusing on his personal side and presenting some episodes of his life during the years he worked for Alex Manoogian.

Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, who worked very closely for decades with Azadian in both the ADL and TCA, and currently continues his role as a prominent world leader of the ADL, the TCA as well as the Canadian-Armenian community, delivered a detailed eulogy in both Armenian and English about the significance of Azadian's multifaceted work in the political, cultural and journalistic realms which was received with a standing ovation (an abridged English version of the text may be found in this issue of the *Mirror-Spectator*).

Fr. Aren Jebejian read an excerpt from a letter from Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America and one from Richard Manoogian, the son of the great industrialist and philanthropist Alex Manoogian, for whom Azadian worked for decades, primarily on Armenian cultural and community issues.

Dr. Raffi Belian spoke about his family's longstanding friendship with the Azadians, underscoring the vivacity with which Edmond and his wife Nora enjoyed life in all its aspects.

Hosep Torossian, principal of the AGBU

Alex and Marie Manoogian School in Southfield, described how Azadian, who served on the school board, was always concerned with its progress and worked to keep it flourishing over the decades.

Ed Haroutunian, chair of the Armenian Genocide Education Committee, spoke of the victories this committee achieved in including education on the Armenian Genocide in Michigan schools, in which Azadian played a role. Alice Nigoghosian, a Manoogian School board member, first read a letter from Dr. Richard Marburger, chairman of the board of the school and president emeritus of Lawrence Tech, and then added some recollections of her own of Azadian, including his support of publications on Armenian culture and history at Wayne State University Press. She stressed how he would always identify the potential in others and make connections and introductions to help promote their achievements.

After the crowd dispersed, with some staying to visit the exquisite Alex and Ma-



Elena Martinez-Azadian and Ara Tcholakian

rie Manoogian Museum in the church complex, the ADL and TCA members present reassembled at a local Armenian restaurant to exchange memories about Azadian in an intimate setting and promised to continue his work together.

Catholicos Karekin II presided over a service in Azadian's memory at the St. Gayaneh Cathedral in Echmiadzin on Sunday, April 24, and a further requiem service will be held on May 14 in Detroit.

A selection from the numerous letters of condolences received will be published in the future by the *Mirror-Spectator* and other ADL publications.



Central Board members of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada with Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, at center

an read in English a translation of the letter of Catholicos Karekin II, while Diocesan Primate Fr. Parsamyan delivered a heartfelt

newly renovated beautiful Cultural Hall of the church, with several hundred guests. Among the noteworthy guests from outside



Arts & Culture

Artist Ani Babaian To Have Solo Show at Armenian Cultural Foundation

ARLINGTON, Mass. — On Saturday, May 13 at 4 p.m., the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF) will host the opening reception of a solo exhibition titled “Soaring,” featuring the latest works of Ani Babaian.

Babaian dedicates “Soaring” to her late parents, who inspired, encouraged and provided a rich background for her creative life. The exhibition features a series of works, including “Untold Stories of Grandma’s Quilt,” “More than Words” and “Legacy.”

“I am thrilled to share my latest works, defined by my identity, thoughts, personal experiences and the beauty around me with art lovers,” said Babaian. “I hope viewers will find meaning and inspiration in my art. I have always believed that art has the power to connect people, and I am excited to connect with the audience



Ani Babaian

through this exhibition.”

Babaian is an independent researcher, artist and art conservator who holds an MFA degree from Alzahra University in Tehran. She has exhibited her paintings in Iran (Isfahan and Tehran), Armenia (Yerevan) and the United States in Massachusetts (Lowell, Lexington, Watertown), New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Maine.

“Soaring” is Babaian’s third solo exhibition, following her first solo exhibition of paintings in Gallery Classic of Isfahan in 2008 and her second exhibition titled “The Spectrum of a Legacy” at the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries of the Armenian Museum of America in 2016.

Babaian has worked on numerous conservation projects, including the murals at the historic 17th century St. Amenaprkich Vank (Holy Savior Cathedral) in New Julfa, Isfahan, murals painting in the Museum of Decorative Arts of Isfahan, paintings of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, and others. She is the curator of the Mardigian Library of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), where she has worked since 2013.

The exhibition will be on view from May 13 to 26, weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and weekends from 1 to 4 p.m. at the ACF, located at 441 Mystic Street in Arlington, MA.

The exhibition is free and open to the public.



François Mardirossian

With Filial and Musical Love to Armenia

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / LYON — I met French pianist and poet François Mardirossian in Yerevan, where he gave a solo concert on last

April 10. He was born in 1989 in Metz, to a French-Armenian father and a French mother. At the age of 19, after studying at the Lyon Conservatory, François joined the Brussels Conservatory. He regularly performs in concerts in France and Belgium. His taste ranges from Frédéric Chopin and Serge Rachmaninov to John Cage, Philip Glass and Keith Jarrett and many contemporary composers. His first solo album, released in 2019, includes recording of the piano works of American composer Moon-dog. His last two recordings released in 2022 by Advitam Records devoted to Philip Glass’ *Piano Etudes* and Alan Hovhaness’ piano works. Mardirossian writes regularly for the contemporary music magazine *Hémisphère Son* and in 2018 released a collection of poetry, *Ce que Bruxelles recèle dans son ciel* (What Brussels holds in its sky) published by Chloé des Lys. In 2021, he was awarded the Grand Prix for music of the Paris/Lyon group.

François, let me congratulate you about your brilliant concert in Yerevan. We all were very impressed to see your unusual energy interpreting Philip Glass. Why did you choose this particular composer?

Philip Glass is a composer who has been with me since my early youth. I discovered his *Violin Concerto* when I was 11 years old by chance in my father’s record library and I fell in love with it. I was soon able to get some of his piano works and as soon as I was old enough to give concerts I put it in my recitals, which was quite rare for a classical pianist, but today I realize that it is the beginning to be accepted more and more in classical venues. I try to interpret him as honestly as possible, like with Chopin, Rachmaninoff or Komitas! I was happy to play his *Etudes* for piano in Yerevan because it is a collection that I often defend in concerts and that I deeply enjoy playing

If you were to meet Glass, what would you ask him?

He got my recording and apparently liked it! If I had to ask him a question: In what state of mind were you while composing the *Opening*, one of my most beautiful pieces for solo piano?

I should confess that although Philip Glass is not my favorite composer, I always take opportunity to listen his opuses and always listen with interest. Back in 2011, I attended his opera, “Satyaghara,” at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Yet his *Piano Etudes* sound extremely exciting to me. Perhaps that was because of your performance.

I am always happy to know that people who don’t necessarily love Glass nevertheless enjoy my concerts or recordings of his music. I think one of the problems with

continued on next page

Mosesian Center for The Arts Announces ‘Moving Forward’ Annual Benefit, Awards

WATERTOWN — The Mosesian Center for the Arts will hold its annual fundraising benefit on Wednesday, May 24. Themed “Moving Forward,” this year’s event will celebrate Mosesian Arts’ strides toward becoming a regional destination for the performing and visual arts. Honorees of the evening’s Mosesian Awards are the acclaimed Sayat Nova Dance Company, moving culture forward throughout the world, and local arts hero Barbara Epstein, who as first president of the Board of Directors helped put the wheels in motion for an arts center at the Arsenal.

The ensembles of Sayat Nova Dance Company will perform, along with cast members of Mosesian Arts’ upcoming Watertown Children’s Theatre production of “Singin’ in the Rain Jr.” Tickets include international hors d’oeuvres, cash bar, awards and entertainment on the main stage, and a selection of desserts. Guests will also be among the first to see the accompanying gallery exhibition, *Flow: Art Inspired by Movement & Sound*.

According to Executive Director Darren Farrington, the theme “Moving Forward,” represents a determination to emerge from the public health and social and economic challenges of the past three years. “The arts community spent the first couple of years of the pandemic waiting to return to operations as they were before March 2020. After being reopened for over a year now, however, we see changes in audiences, in artists, and in the world, and we know that we can never go back to ‘before.’ The only path from here is ‘moving forward.’” To support the arts center’s path forward, event proceeds will support exceptional programs in visual and performing arts education, including Watertown Children’s Theatre; free art exhibitions, artist talks, and opening receptions in newly expanded galleries; and diverse events on MCA’s stages and in the community, including opportunities and access to the arts for older adults “Aging Creatively,” and American Sign Language (ASL) Storytime programs free of charge to libraries throughout Greater Boston and MetroWest.

The Mosesian Awards to be given at the event recognize individuals and organizations that exemplify the overarching commitment to the arts and this community shown by Charles Mosesian, an early major donor to the arts center.

Sayat Nova Dance Company preserves and promotes the Armenian culture through the art of dance. The company seeks to foster an atmosphere of friendship among individuals sharing the pride and indomitable spirit of the Armenian people, while educating multicultural awareness within all ethnic communities worldwide. Founded in 1986, they began a journey of bringing talented individuals together from all ages and backgrounds to join in bringing Armenian see AWARDS, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

François Mardirossian: With Filial and Musical Love to Armenia

from previous page

Glass is that it is often misinterpreted: in a mechanical, soulless way, or sometimes the opposite, in an overly corny way. I try to play these *Etudes* as I feel them and as I read them — scrupulously but with emotion. Of course, there are feelings on the surface with this composer, but we must not forget that he is above all a radical composer. Like Pierre Boulez. These two composers have nothing to do with each other, but they have only one undeniable point in common: either one adores them or one hates them to the utmost. However, it is undeniable that both of them have made the history of music of the last century.

Your biography mentions Svetlana Eganian as one of few fortunate encounters that led you to make the piano your profession. Who is this musician?

She is a French teacher of Russo-Armenian origin with whom I had the joy of working for several years. She taught me a lot, especially Scriabin and Schumann. She taught for some time at the Conservatoire supérieur de musique de Lyon.

You perform Alan Hovhaness and Gurdjieff, whom we can consider Armenian composers, but you also played

Arno Babadjanyan. And you showed us a bunch of piano works of Armenian composers. Are you expanding your Armenian repertoire?

I have always loved Armenian music, not only piano music. I highly love to play it! I perform Babadjanyan, Komitas of course, Abramyan, Baghdassaryan, Arutunyan. I took the opportunity of this recent concert to look for others and I made some splendid discoveries: Robert Amirkhanyan, Georgy Sarajyan, Nikoghayos Tigranyan, etc. I plan to have a recital with all these composers but also female composers as I also like Gayane Chebotaryan very much. I am very happy that my third CD is dedicated to the American composer of Armenian origin Alan Hovhaness. His music remains relatively unknown in the country of his origins, even though it was very much inspired by Armenia. This disc was awarded the title of best recording of the year by a French magazine.

What is Armenia for you?

This was my second trip. I had already visited with my sisters and my father in 2014 for more than three weeks. We had stayed in Yerevan for a long time and then we had done the monasteries route, gone

to the Sevan lake, to the South, etc. At that time, it was a trip that excited me and brought me a lot. I reconnected with my origins and the country of my ancestors, even though I don't speak the Armenian language.

Where is the Mardirossian family originally from and what Armenian traditions do you observe, if any?

I don't know exactly where my family comes from: I think it's more in Western Armenia or Anatolia. I have always lived with the knowledge of Armenian history, its culinary culture, but mainly the music! Since my return from my second visit to Armenia, I have been reading some books and frankly I would be happy to come back and promote these discovered composers - who are not played more in Armenia as far as I can see from my research!

You also write poetry. Have you written anything after your trip to Armenia?

Poetry was a part of me for a few months, almost six years ago. I wrote a whole col-



lection very quickly and in a very particular feeling. I managed to publish it but since then nothing. I am more interested in expressing myself in music now. So, why not a tribute piece to Armenia? Like the improvisation from a theme of Komitas, at the end of my concert...

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Spicy Citrus Salad with Pistachios

Introducing At the Immigrant's Table (ATIT), a food and travel blog with hundreds of easy, healthy and family-friendly international recipes and gluten-free baking recipes perfect for breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert and snack times. You will find a variety of Jewish recipes, Middle Eastern cuisine, Russian recipes, Colombian recipes, helpful guides, plus vegetarian, vegan, plant-based, sourdough baking, canning, fermentation and air fryer recipes.

In this beautiful salad, blood oranges, mandarins and grapefruit slices intermingle with slivers of sweet onion, sprinkled with pistachios and paprika, and topped with a simple marinade of lime juice and olive oil.

INGREDIENTS:

3-4 citrus fruits of various kinds and sizes oranges, grapefruits, pink grapefruits, pomelos, clementines, blood oranges and even kumquats are all good (avoid anything too small and soft, like mandarins)
1 Vidalia sweet white onion or 1/2 purple onion
1/4 cup pistachios (finely chopped)
3 sprigs of thyme
Juice and zest of 1 lime, to taste
1/8 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika or cayenne pepper
Maldon sea salt to taste

PREPARATION:

With a sharp paring knife, cut the peel away from the citrus, taking care to remove all the pith. Slice the citrus into 1/2-inch-thick slices. Thinly slice the onion into half-moon crescents. Arrange the citrus and onion slices interchangeably on a platter in several layers.

Chop pistachios and thyme roughly, and sprinkle on the fruit. Top with grated lime zest, smoked paprika or cayenne pepper. Drizzle with lime juice and olive oil. Finish the salad with a generous sprinkle of Maldon sea salt.

For this recipe, go to:

<https://immigrantstable.com/spicy-citrus-salad-pistachios-dish-distills-pardes/>

Ksenia Prints, creator, writer, food and travel blogger, photographer and storyteller

Ksenia Prints is a fifth-generation immigrant who was born in the former Soviet Union, grew up in Israel and now resides in Montreal, Quebec, and whose food is a mélange of cultures and traditions. She spends her time cooking, writing, and photographing food for <https://immigrantstable.com/> At the Immigrant's Table and other freelance publications.

"I am the daughter of immigrants, an immigrant myself, and married to another immigrant. My journey has taken me from the former Soviet Union to Israel, and now all the way to Montreal, Canada (through Winnipeg). Through food, I reconnect with my family's migrant history, adapting it to common dietary restrictions. I am also an avid traveler who enjoys exploring the world and other cultures through immigrant cuisines. Suitcases contain many things: clothes, photographs, and housewares. Pieces of ourselves that we drag across borders, reminders of where we come from, or equipment for who we want to be. But our family's kitchen table can't be transported, no matter how big the suitcase is. There is no container large enough in the world to hold the smells, sights, flavors and textures of our homes. This blog is my attempt at recreating those immigrant kitchen tables."

To order, go to: <https://immigrantstable.com/the-middle-eastern-small-plates-e-book/>

Ksenia adds, "Food is the ultimate connector -- and nothing brings people together like a food workshop. Bring your audience to the virtual world and allow them to connect over a guided, interactive and fun experience. Bring your team, audience or followers together through an interactive, beautiful virtual workshop. We will cook, chat and connect over your brand and products. Whether you're lactose-free, gluten-free, paleo, candida-friendly, vegetarian, vegan, or just a picky eater, chances are you'll find something among these pages. If you're a brand interested in recipe development, check out <https://immigrantstable.com/services> how we can work together." Go to: <https://immigrantstable.com/services>

Also see Ksenia's recipes at:

https://www.onegreenplanet.org/author/ksenia_prints/

For her Middle Eastern recipes, go to:

<https://immigrantstable.com/middle-eastern-cuisine/>

See her Middle Eastern Lavosh Crackers (vegan) at:

<https://www.onegreenplanet.org/vegan-recipe/middle-eastern-lavosh-crackers/>

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ARTS & CULTURE

INTERTWINED LEGACIES

GOMIDAS VARTABED (1869-1935)
& KOHARIK GAZAROSSIAN (1907-1967)



LECTURE & MINI CONCERT

by DR. MELISSA BILAL
& UCLA VEM ENSEMBLE

May 12, 2023 | 12:30 PM
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To find the room: whereis.mit.edu

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California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation
Announces Essay and Visual Arts Scholarship Winners

SACRAMENTO — The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation announced recently the winners of this year’s 2023 California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Scholarship, 6 California high school students who entered essay and arts contests.

Senator María Elena Durazo (D- Little Armenia Hollywood) declared, “We commend you for undertaking the task of raising awareness about the Armenian Genocide.”

Senator Anthony Portantino (D- Burbank) stated, “It’s wonderful to see that the California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Annual Essay Contest fosters academic opportunities and increases awareness of the Armenian Genocide through education.”

Senator Scott Wilk (R- Santa Clarita) wrote, “Expression through creativity is one of the best ways we can generate honest discussion about the darkest moments in human history. This scholarship opportunity has been vital in doing just that – to raise awareness about the atrocities of the Armenian genocide, while preserving and highlighting the rich culture and resilience of the Armenian people today.”

Assemblymember Lisa Calderon (D- Whittier)

ing their education, but it’s also an opportunity to educate the next generation about the atrocious genocide committed against the Armenian community. I want to thank these students for evoking the sensitivity that is the Armenian genocide and for using art and writing to express the violence that was inflicted in the Armenian community.”

Assemblymember Blanca E. Rubio (D- Baldwin Park) said, “These students’ incredible talents are a testament to their success in and outside of the classroom. It is a privilege to witness our youth committing themselves to raising awareness about the Armenian Genocide.”

Assemblymember Miguel Santiago (D- Los Angeles) wrote, “It is our greatest honor to award these brilliant scholars! It is also inspiring to see the immense creativity in our next generation of leaders. The impact of the Armenian genocide is an important part of American history and it is vital to ensure we preserve Armenian culture. I applaud these students and their willingness in educating and raising awareness about the injustices that Armenian people faced to prevent history from being repeated. We must continue to accentuate the resilience of the Armenian people and the many contributions they have made to California. Congratulations!”



First prize, by Arootin Asatourkazarian



Second prize, by Aleen Kojikian

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Notice to Our Subscribers Regarding Print Version

Dear subscribers, it has come to our attention that for the past year, and specifically the past month, the delivery of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* has been erratic.

Please note that our paper goes to our printer at the same time every week and is mailed out the same time every week. Nothing has changed.

The delivery problems all lie with the postal service, which is understaffed, and though we have contacted them repeatedly, we have not been able to resolve the problem.

er) stated, “This year marks the 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, which reminds us of the resiliency of the people of Armenia.”

Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo (D- Los Angeles) wrote, “The Armenian-American diaspora across California is part of the very fabric of America, and for many first generation college students this scholarship is monumental. Understanding the impact of the Armenian genocide is why the legislature passed AB 101, which would make Ethnic Studies a high school graduation requirement. The history of the Armenian people is an American history that should be taught to all students. I am so proud of all our scholars whose achievements reflect how higher education can improve the lives of our families.”

Assemblymember Laura Friedman (D- Glendale) exclaimed, “These six high school students represent the next generation of leaders and their incredible work serves as a critical reminder of the importance of genocide education.”

Assemblymember Chris Holden (D- Pasadena) wrote, “The fight for justice starts early! Thank you to the California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation for involving our young people in this important commemoration. When we remember the Armenian Genocide, today, we commit ourselves to fighting injustice and inequality by governments everywhere.”

Assemblymember Luz Rivas (D- San Fernando Valley) stated, “These funds will go on to support students who are further-

Finally, Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur (D- West Hollywood/Santa Monica) stated, “Raising awareness of the Armenian Genocide through education provides the next generation with the knowledge to fight anti-Armenian hate and discrimination. I believe that recognizing the kinds of atrocities committed against this incredible group of people is necessary to ensure acts like these are never again committed in this world.”



Third prize, by Sophia He



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

- MAY 6 — CELEBRATE PUBLIC ART!** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Welcome at 12:45pm. At 1pm participate in World Labyrinth Day: Walk as One in Peace & Harmony joining all ages in cities and towns worldwide followed by the Reception to Celebrate the 2023 Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture. Remarks by Audrey Lopez, Director of Public Art, The Greenway Conservancy. Hosted by Starbucks. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org Also, ongoing weekly, June-August, LABYRINTH WELLNESS WALKS TOGETHER. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Tuesdays at 10:30am. For Dates & Details, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Events
- MAY 10 — Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association's 37th Annual Meeting of Members**, Wednesday, 7 p.m., with guest speaker Luke Bruffee. Business meeting and reception to follow, @National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), 395 Concord Ave, Belmont.
- MAY 11 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music's Armenian School Program** present the VEM Ensemble. CO-sponsored by the Holy Trinity Armenian Church, the performance will take place at the church, 145 Brattle ST., Cambridge, on 7.30. For more info, call 617-924-4455.
- MAY 12 — The Erebuni Armenian School** presents a performance by renowned international comedian Kev Orkian. 7-9.30 p.m., Get ready for an evening of fun and laughter as Kev entertains us with his brand new live show "COVID MOVIDI!" Tickets can be purchased at <https://buytickets.at/erebuni/866438> starting at \$40. You can call 508-494-6008 or 781-883-4470 for tickets as well. All tickets are final sale! If you purchase a student ticket, ID is required at the door. The show is 90% in English and 10% in Armenian. JFK Middle School, 655 Lexington St., Waltham.
- MAY 12 — Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Music and Theater Arts Department, MIT History, and UCLA Armenian Music Program** Present: "Intertwined Legacies: Gomidas Vartabed (1869-1935) and Koharik Gaza-rossian (1907-1967)" Lecture and mini-concert by Dr. Melissa Bilal and UCLA VEM Ensemble. Friday, 12:30 p.m. MIT Building 4, Classroom 231 <http://whereis.mit.edu/> Co-sponsors: National Association of Armenian Studies and Research, Tekeyan Cultural Association.
- MAY 13 — Opening reception for the solo exhibit "Soaring,"** by artist Ani Babaian, at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington. 4-7 p.m. Exhibit to remain on display through May 26, weekdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., weekends 1-4 p.m.
- MAY 17 — TEA & TRANQUILITY.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 4pm Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org
- MAY 19 — The Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown** will hold its Annual Fair on Friday, from 5 to- 8 p.m. and Saturday, May 20, from 12 pm to 7 pm (rain or shine). Both days, the Church will be serving its delicious kebab dinners and exquisite desserts. Enjoy the fabulous Armenian beef, chicken and losh (ground meat) kebab dinners complete with sauce, rice pilaf, salad and pita bread. The selection will also include meatless meals. Visitors may enjoy eating at tables under the tent or may purchase take-out orders if they prefer. Proceeds will go to Syria Earthquake Relief through the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). 32 Bigelow Avenue in Watertown, just off Coolidge Square. Admission is free. The Church is wheelchair accessible. For more information call 617-923-0498.
- MAY 19 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter and the Armenian Mirror-Spectator** present a lecture by Yerevan political scientist Suren Sargsyan titled "Current Geopolitical Challenges Facing Armenia." 7:30 p.m., complimentary admission, at the Baika Building's newly renovated downstairs hall, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com or telephone 617 924-4455

- JUNE 4 — MEGHRI DERVARTANIAN, CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 2pm shares the story of her recently published, «Դէպի Արարատ Լեռ» "Toward Mt. Ararat" (2022) Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Interactive Program. Book Signing. Refreshments hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers. Announcement. For all ages. RSVP appreciated
- JUNE 8 — UNDER THE STRAWBERRY MOON.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 8:15pm. Meet & Greet. Chocolate Dipped Strawberries hosted by Ovenbird Cafe. RSVP appreciated, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org
- JUNE 9 —70th Annual Armenian Night** at the Pops, Symphony Hall, Boston. Featuring violinist Eva Aronian and the Boston Pops Orchestra, in a performance of the Allegro Vivace movement from the violin concerto by Aram Khachaturian, marking the iconic composer's 120th anniversary of birth. The evening will feature A Symphonic Journey, a musical tour of Europe and Armenia, presented by the Boston Pops and Maestro Keith Lockhart, in collaboration with European travel authority and writer Rick Steves. Visit www.FACSBoston.org to select seats and purchase tickets.
- OCTOBER 27-28 — SAVE THE DATE.** The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will celebrate its 90th anniversary with two programs, a panel featuring top-notch journalists on October 27 and a banquet on October 28. Details to follow.
- JUNE 11 — St. James Armenian Festival – Annual Picnic!** Delicious Armenian food, Live Armenian music, children's activities with moon bounce, face painting, and more! Rain or shine. Noon-5pm. St. James Armenian Church - 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown MA. For more info visit www.stjameswatertown.org/festival or call 617.923.8860.

MICHIGAN

- MAY 9 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music's Armenian School Program** present the VEM Ensemble. St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall, 22001 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield. 7 p.m. Co-sponsored by the Cultural Society of Armenians From Istanbul and the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School. For more information call 248-505-6159.

MONTREAL

- MAY 13 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music's Armenian School Program** present the VEM Ensemble. 8 p.m. Tekeyan Center, 825 Manoogian ST., Saint Laurent, Canada. Tickets \$20. Call 514-747-6680.

NEW JERSEY

- MAY 10 — The Armenian Missionary Association of America** will host a book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian on her father's memoirs, Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army. Venue/ Time - AMAA Headquarters, 31 West Century Road, Paramus. 7 p.m. Registration requested - Call Magda Poulos at (201) 265-2607 x 107 or e-mail mpoulos@amaa.org Book signing during reception. All proceeds from the sale of books will benefit the AMAA Syrian Relief Fund.
- MAY 13 — Save the Date!** The Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group will mark its 25th anniversary with a gala. Details to follow.

RHODE ISLAND

- MAY 6 — Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church AMARAS Art Alliance** proudly presents the world-renowned Nairyan Vocal Ensemble from Armenia. Saturday, May 6 at 7 p.m., Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence. Donation \$25, children 6 to 16 - \$10. Refreshments will be available.

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More." You can also mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication. There is no fee

Mosesian Center for the Arts Announces 'Moving Forward' Annual Benefit, Awards

AWARDS, from page 14
folk dance to life. The group performs extensively throughout the United States and Canada, as well as in Armenia, with each dance symbolizing the livelihood, the aspirations, the legends, the celebration of life, and appreciation of beauty.

Epstein has worked to elevate and celebrate the arts throughout her 37 years in Watertown. She has been a member of the Watertown Cultural Council, enrichment coordinator for the Watertown elementary and middle schools, and president of the founding board that dreamed and launched the Mosesian Center for the Arts. She and

a small ad hoc group instigated the master planning process that led to the establishment of the Watertown Public Arts and Culture Committee. YardArt, conceived during the 2020 pandemic, was her most recent project to harness art to strengthen community and honor the creativity within all of us.

Individual tickets and sponsorship packages are available at www.mosesianarts.org. The reception begins at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 24. Awards and entertainment will begin at 7:15 p.m.

The Mosesian Center for the Arts is located at 321 Arsenal Street in Watertown.



The Sayat Nova Dance Company

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
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Eulogy for Edmond Azadian Delivered By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian

As dear Edmond's friend of many decades, inseparable in thoughts, principles and convictions and always in the closest collaboration, I wish I would have not lived to see and experience this day, and to have to carry the heavy burden of this sad occasion.

Edmond Azadian was certainly, in many respects, one of the most singular and irreplaceable personalities of our contemporary Armenian worldwide community. His unusually productive community life spans some seven decades, which start in Beirut, Lebanon, at the newspaper *Zartonk*, under the masterful guidance of another giant of the past, Kersam Aharonian, then continue in Egypt, during the critical decade where the infamous Antelias schism and the intense crisis within our church took place. Edmond was at the forefront of the defense of our church and Holy Echmiadzin, as by then he already had become the chief editor of our local lead paper *Arev*. Then finally comes the last five-decade-long period, with his arrival to the blessed land of the United States of America, where starts the most extraordinary period of Edmond's gift of his abilities to the Armenian nation.



Dr. Arshavir Gundjian

Just before leaving Egypt, Edmond had met one exceptionally refined lady, Nora Ipekian Papazian, who became the inspiring companion of his life for well over four decades. The late Nora, granddaughter of the iconic Ramgavar Party founder Mihran Damadian, was a refined full-fledged intellectual and artist who served as an inspiration, support, and driving force during the largest part of Edmond's active life.

A fair and complete presentation of Edmond's unusually rich legacy will always be a most challenging responsibility.

Edmond was, from quite early in his youth, a true believer in the principles of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL), the Ramgavar Azadagan Gousagtzoutyoum. He was an admirer and follower of its illustrious founders, such as Mihran Damadian and Vahan Tekeyan, and their successors, including Kersam Aharonian Parounag Tovmassian and Haigashen Ouzounian.

Indeed, the true traditional Ramgavar party was from the start, and still remains today, a selfless defender of the highest interests of the Armenian nation and our mother church. Such noble objectives fitted perfectly with Edmond's most profound convictions.

As one of the successors of these aforementioned leaders, he too has now become part of ADL history.

Above all else, however, Edmond was an exceptionally avid lover and supporter of Armenian history, literature, and art, and eventually became a widely recognized expert in these fields. He was literally a live encyclopedia, with the additional unique ability of being capable of giving an in-

depth analysis of the context of every entangled situation that would come up almost every day of our organizational life.

One of our mutual late friends, another active ADL member of this community that many of you would have known, the late Noubar Dorian, had coined for Edmond, who was modest only in his physical height, the fully justified expressive qualifier of an intellectual giant, which we often used rightfully and amusingly among friends.

Immediately after his arrival in this vast North American community, quite expectedly, Edmond became rapidly one of the top leaders of the ADL and of the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Soon, however, in the early 1970s, came a true blessed turning point in his life. The great philanthropist, the late iconic Life-President of the AGBU, Alex Manoogian, having spotted Edmond's exceptional abilities, asked him to become his personal secretary.

It will certainly not be an overstatement to declare today, on this solemn occasion, that this turned out to be a momentous turning point, not only for Edmond Azadian personally, but also through him, for our own organizations;

and eventually, for literally the entire diaspora, for at least the long stretch of the full quarter century that followed.

The late Alex Manoogian, as exceptionally successful a businessman as he was, was also an unequaled magnanimous Armenian, with unusually deep concern for the wellbeing of his people, his church, his community and his motherland. That is why he has been widely recognized as the unparalleled leader of the Armenian diaspora of his time.

As a firsthand witness, and a full and active permanent participant, I feel perfectly

justified to confirm on this momentous occasion, for history's sake, that during that proverbial quarter century, starting in the early seventies, it was thanks to the full and unwavering interest and generous and constant encouragement of Alex Manoogian, coupled with the unusual abilities and the productive, dedicated presence and catalytic role of Edmond Azadian, the totally selfless dedicated role of the Ramgavar top leadership of that period, and also, it goes without saying, thanks to the late blessed Catholicos, His Holiness Vasken the First, at the head of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, that the active segment of the diaspora of that time lived the Golden Age of our recent history.

Of course crises, as ever, were present at that time as well. However, there existed a general feeling of confidence and an intuitive comforting expectation and hope that somehow, some soothing resolution would eventually be worked out for every one of those situations.

That was the period where Detroit with the towering personality of Alex Manoogian had become the source of hope and stability for concerned diasporan Armenians.

It was during this same long stretch of years that Edmond had been able to translate his true love for the intellectual values of our nation into substantial and highly appreciated help to multiple institutions and valuable intellectuals across the entire Armenian world, in Armenia as well the diaspora.

It is truly impossible for me to enumerate and comment on every one of the academic and professional institutions of which Edmond ended up becoming an actively supporting

continued on next page



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

New Turkish Denial Tactic: Impeach Biden For Recognizing the Armenian Genocide!

For over a century, successive Turkish governments have tried various tricks to deny the veracity of the Armenian Genocide. All of their attempts have miserably failed. Turkey exerted diplomatic pressure around the globe and spent tens of millions of dollars hiring high-priced lobbying firms to deny the undeniable. Contrary to post-war Germany which admitted its guilt in the Holocaust and made amends, the Turkish government, by continuing its denials, is labelled around the world as an unrepentant criminal regime. Turkey would have been better off coming clean by acknowledging and making restitution for the mass crimes of 1915 rather than perpetuating the disgraceful legacy of its barbaric past.

The latest ridiculous Turkish denialist tactic is claiming that President Joe Biden, by acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, “violated four articles of the U.S. Constitution.” If genocide was not a gruesome subject, such an accusation would have been amusing. However, the comedy does not stop there. In an interview with Turkish journalist Ugur Dundar, published in several Turkish media outlets, former Turkish Ambassador to the United States, Sukru Elekdag, suggested that Turkish groups try to impeach Biden after he leaves the White House, even though a president cannot be impeached after he is no longer in office.

Ambassador Elekdag is not a constitutional law expert. He studied economics in college and later became a diplomat. He knows nothing about the U.S. Constitution.

When the Turkish journalist asked Elekdag how can Turks sue Biden since he referred to the Ottoman Empire as the perpetrator of the Genocide, not the Republic of Turkey, the Ambassador foolishly pointed out that “there is no ethnicity called Ottoman. Ottoman is the name of a dynasty. Those who founded the Ottoman state are Turks and they are our ancestors and we are their descendants.” So, Elekdag is suggesting that Turks sue Biden for accusing the Ottoman Empire of genocide. However, since Elekdag is associating the Republic of Turkey with the Ottoman Empire, then Turkey is naturally liable for the Ottoman crimes.

Elekdag’s falsely alleged that President Biden violated Article VI, the Fifth Amendment, Article 1 (Section 9), and the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution.

Elekdag suggested that President Erdogan of Turkey announce to the world that “President Biden has committed a crime by violating the U.S. Constitution with his 24 April statements.” This is the most ridiculous part of the whole interview. President Erdogan, who has committed massive crimes against hundreds of thousands of Turkish citizens, is the last person on earth to accuse

anyone of committing a crime.

At the end of his interview, Elekdag stated that he had contacted the leaders of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) who told him that they will consider his accusations of President Biden.

Elekdag suggested that an academic research be conducted on “whether or not to impeach and prosecute a former U.S. president” for his “constitutional offenses.” The ATAA is now planning to hold a symposium at an American university “with the participation of historians and lawyers.”

I received a copy of ATAA’s letter to President Biden dated April 18, 2023, telling him that his previous two years’ April 24 statements “disregarded at least four articles and amendments of the U.S. Constitution.” Nevertheless, a week after receiving ATAA’s letter, President Biden once again issued an Armenian Genocide statement on April 24, 2023, ignoring the Turkish warnings. The ATAA told President Biden that his April 24 statements were “motivated solely to gain political popularity among the strong Armenian diaspora.”

At the end of its letter, the ATAA falsely claimed that there was an “initiative by the republics of Türkiye and Armenia to establish a Joint Historical Commission, composed of historians and legal scholars to be selected by Ankara and Erivan.”

I would like to add a few thoughts to this Turkish onslaught of misrepresentations:

I will be greatly pleased if the ATAA takes legal action against President Biden which will result in publicizing worldwide the crime of Genocide committed by Ottoman Turkey. The ATAA’s lawyers will be happy to enrich themselves by getting paid to file such a frivolous lawsuit.

If Elekdag was really a constitutional law expert, why didn’t he sue President Ronald Reagan in 1981 and the U.S. House of Representatives in 1984, when they recognized the Armenian Genocide, while he was Ambassador in Washington, D.C.? Why didn’t the ATAA file lawsuits for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the House of Representatives in 1975, the Senate and House of Representatives in 2019, and all 50 U.S. states?

The ATAA can save a lot of money and effort by simply asking Google’s Artificial Intelligence website if Turks can sue President Biden for acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. Here is AI’s answer:

“No, Biden did not violate the Constitution by recognizing the Armenian genocide. The Constitution does not explicitly prohibit the President from making such a declaration, and there is no precedent to suggest that it would be considered unconstitutional.... The Armenian genocide was the systematic extermination of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire during World War I. It is estimated that between 1.5 and 2 million Armenians were killed during the genocide. The Turkish government has long denied that the genocide took place, but there is overwhelming evidence to support the fact that it did. Biden’s recognition of the Armenian genocide was a long-overdue step in acknowledging one of the darkest chapters in human history. It is a powerful statement of America’s commitment to human rights and justice.”

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board member. It is also very hard to enumerate all the talented intellectuals in Armenia and the diaspora with whom Edmond was well acquainted, and for whom he felt a compelling responsibility to provide what turned out to be for them often a providential help.

For many years, Edmond could accomplish this mission as the chairman of the Alex and Marie Manoogian Cultural Fund of the AGBU.

Later on, and until he departed this world, it has been in his capacity of the dedicated president of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada. We all know that Edmond would constantly push us to stretch our limited means to the utmost, in order to support different deserving publications, or help some deserving activity of a creative intellectual.

All of this explains the unusual outpouring of heartfelt condolences that we keep receiving to this day and which we will present and publish soon in an appropriate format.

Of course, Armenian politics is inevitably and constantly part of all meaningful community activity. As I already mentioned, because of his solidly entrenched belief in the noble values and interests of our nation, Edmond’s choice was inevitable. It was natural for Edmond to become a Ramgavar.

The backdrop to Edmond’s life in Armenian politics has been the complex political quagmire that has engulfed our nation. It started in the complex period of the Soviet regime in Armenia, then continued after the independence of 1990 and now developed into the current alarming period of the Armenia-Artzakh existential crisis. All along, the artificially generated crisis of the Antelias-schism within our Apostolic church has remained part of this quagmire.

In Armenian politics, Edmond demonstrated his talent first as a young journalist, but soon after he also became an elected member of different regional, and ultimately central, governing bodies of the ADL. He ultimately became one of the top leaders, who, in a small core group of principled colleagues, have been giving persistently sought-after guidance, and stability, to our worldwide political, cultural and educational organizations, which

stretch from Armenia to Artsakh, the Middle East and North and South Americas.

In the context of this global community activity, Edmond’s unique presence in our media, and his irreplaceable role of leadership, can hardly be overemphasized.

Edmond has been a generous contributor to all, and the actual chief editor of some of the ten ADL and Tekeyan publications. He was among the founders of Azg, the pioneering first democratic paper that Ramgavars introduced in the newly independent Armenia. He also helped in the founding of *Abaka*, the first Armenian trilingual paper of the newly formed Canadian community, and last but not least, since 2017, he headed the revival of *Baika* as the Boston-based official paper of the Ramgavar media.

Most notably, in general, he has been at the helm of our entire media in his role of top political analyst and commentator. In that respect, he became a recognized worldwide expert perhaps as much for our political adversaries as our allied circles. His editorial columns in *Baika*, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, *Abaka*, *Sardarabad* and *Azg* have become a sought out constant source of information, education and guidance for a national readership.

Thus, while there are many ways in which Edmond’s sudden loss will be very much felt, the greatest effect will be the huge vacuum created by the absence of his well-considered words in our media.

Finally, while he was carrying out this multipronged extraordinary mission in the Armenian world, even at his advanced age, Edmond was a true globetrotter. He was a sought-after visitor, organizer, and speaker in our communities, as much in Armenia as in different important centers of the diaspora. As a matter of fact, his very last trip was to Buenos Aires, Argentina, as the guest of honor at the inauguration of the beautifully renovated and redecorated modern Tekeyan Center in the heart of that remote but vibrant city at the southern tip of this continent.

Dear all, *Sireliner*,

As we are gathered here, paying our last respects, and mourning profoundly the enormous loss of an extraordinary brother, friend, colleague and leader, based even on this abridged review of Edmond’s extraordinary legacy, I

believe that you will all agree that as of this moment, our mourning ought to evolve into a celebration of our dearest friend Edmond’s life, his exceptional dedication and invaluable contribution to his community, to Holy Etchmiadzin, and to our eternal motherland, Armenia.

As his immediate colleagues, we now have the most difficult challenge and obligation to continue the great mission we have been engaged in with dear Edmond.

Dear friends, the Armenian world is currently seriously perturbed. Furthermore, it is immersed in a crises-ridden whole planet. Our own organization, the Ramgavar party, in spite of our recent intense efforts together with *enger* Azadian, still remains divided due to senseless, futile quarrels.

We thus need to carry this almost impossible mission now, while missing one of our most solid central pillars.

Dear friends, I certainly disagree with that casually repeated hollow sounding saying that no one is irreplaceable in this world. That statement is fundamentally wrong. Indeed, be it in the world at large and certainly in our Armenian world, while it is true that many may, and eventually do, get replaced physically, there are certainly some who cannot, have never been, and will also never truly be replaced. Edmond will sadly be one addition to that illustrious list.

Nevertheless, we certainly will do our utmost to carry this torch and will certainly try in turn to pass it to the younger generation, urging them to answer our calls, urging them to become the next bearers of this enormous responsibility.

Dear Edmond, may your soul rest in peace, as your friends will honor your memory by trying to do their best to continue the mission you dearly believed in.

We will all miss you dear Edmond, very much.

May God bless your soul!

May the earth lie lightly on your tired bones.

[This is an edited and abridged version of the Armenian and English language eulogy delivered on Saturday, April 22 by the author at the Cultural Hall of St. John Armenian Church in Southfield, Michigan.]



VEM Ensemble to Perform in Detroit, Boston and Montreal in May

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Tarō Ferguson on cello. TCA last brought VEM to the East Coast of the US and Canada in 2019 as part of its mission to support the development of Armenian culture, and if not for Covid, would have accommodated requests for return performances much earlier.

Pogossian, the initiator of VEM and founder and director of the Armenian Music Program, explained VEM's mission: "UCLA is the only university in the world that has an Armenian music program. The goal is to introduce [university] students to Armenian music. Almost always, the VEM members are students of non-Armenian descent. They are getting acquainted with this [Armenian] music for the first time, but they fall in love with our art and become great ambassadors for Armenian culture."

Among the special elements of the current tour are the guest appearance of pianist Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian with VEM in Boston, where two pieces will be dedicated to the memory of her late husband, Ambassador Rouben Shougarian, and the dedication of the Detroit performance to the memory of the late Dickran Toumajan.

What to Expect

When VEM was in Armenia in March 2023, it gave concerts in Dilijan, Gyumri and Yerevan. "Everywhere we performed, the audiences welcomed us with so much enthusiasm for what we were doing, which created the most special concert atmosphere I've personally yet experienced, said Zavala. "Despite the language barrier, the warmth and support of the Armenian audiences at our performances was visceral and I know we left each concert venue with our cups overflowing with emotion at the end of the night."

In some instances, reactions were overwhelming. "During our final concert, in Yerevan, I heard an unusual sound behind me," said Pogossian. "I'll admit I was a little annoyed, because VEM alumna Danielle Segen was singing the *Horzham*, the ancient Armenian *sharakan*, from the balcony. She sounded heavenly, and I didn't want to be distracted." But any irritation Pogossian felt evaporated when he turned his head and saw a young woman sobbing uncontrollably.

"She was having a powerful reaction to the spiritual impact of that holy music," said Pogossian. "I think we all were having our own personal reactions. It was beyond words."

Among the composers whose works will be performed during the current tour are Komitas, Khachaturian, Mansurian, Shostakovich, Babajanyan, Mirzoyan, Goharik Gazarovian, Khosroviducht and Svendsen. The VEM members were fortunate to receive personal coaching from Tigran Mansurian during their visit to Armenia.

The VEM Performers Movses Pogossian

Movses Pogossian is a celebrated prize-winning violinist who made his American debut performing the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the Boston Pops at Symphony Hall in 1990. He has since performed extensively in North America and Europe as a soloist, sought-after chamber musician, and enthusiastic advocate of new music. Movses Pogossian is the founding director of UCLA's Armenian Music Program, as well as the artistic director of the critically acclaimed Dilijan Chamber Music Series in Los Angeles. His prolific discography includes "Complete Sonatas and Partitas by J. S. Bach" and solo violin CDs "Inspired by Bach," "Blooming Sounds," and "In Nomine." Most recently, there are "Hommage à Kurtág," "Modulation Neck-

lace," a CD of New Armenian Music, and "Con Anima," containing chamber music of Tigran Mansurian, with renowned violinist Kim Kashkashian. He has an upcoming 4-CD set sequel of new music from Armenia called "Serenade with a Dandelion."

Pogossian has earned his advanced degrees from the Komitas Conservatory in Armenia and the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music in Moscow and is currently a Professor of Violin at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music. A committed educator and community organizer, he participates in the Music for Food project, which gives the opportunity to experience the powerful role music can play as a catalyst for change.

Ela Kodžas

Eager to honor and explore a variety of musical traditions, Serbian-American violinist Ela Kodžas, graduated as a Pi Kappa Lambda Scholar from the Eastman School of Music with a Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance with High Distinction under the tutelage of Renée Jolles. She was also the only student in her graduating year to receive a Certificate of Achievement in

Throughout his high school career, Damon grew into an emerging young violist and violinist in the state of Oregon and broader Pacific Northwest winning most notably two OSAA state titles in solo viola performance. With a desire to see more of the world and to experience a wider range of the music, Damon eventually moved 2000 miles away from home to go to college in Music City.

In Nashville, his principal teachers included Kathryn Plummer and Daniel Reinker. Throughout his time in undergrad, Damon has enjoyed a varied and eclectic musical career. These eclectic interests led Damon to a variety of artistic collaborations around Nashville including: working with singer-songwriters, recording film scores, and presenting pop music productions with Listeso Music Group. In May of 2022, Damon graduated with academic honors from Vanderbilt University with a Bachelor's in Music.

Presently, Damon Zavala is a violist and violinist based in Los Angeles, California studying and instructing part-time at the

been performed throughout California and overseas, in such places as the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Barnum Hall, the Palau de la Música Catalana, the Aratani Theatre at JACCC, among others. In 2021, his piece *Scamper* was chosen to be performed virtually for the California Orchestra Directors Association's All-State High School Orchestra.

Niall has orchestrated on several films including "Bruised" (2021), "Cat Burglar" (2021), "American Factory" (2020 Academy Awards Best Documentary Feature winner), "Fast and Furious Presents: Hobbs and Shaw" (2019), "Ni No Kuni" (2019), and "Kruimeltje" (2020). He has worked as an orchestrator on two of composer Joe Hisaishi's concert tours: Kiki's Delivery Service in 2019, and Porco Rosso in 2022. Niall's string arrangements have also been featured on a number of commercial recordings, most notably on Lukas Graham's "3 (The Purple Album)," which was released in October 2018 by Copenhagen Records, "Then We Take the World," and Warner Bros. Records, and debuted at number one in Denmark.

As of 2019, Niall is a Program Associate with the Asia/America New Music Institute (AANMI), a collective that pursues cultural exchange through modern music. In April 2019 he participated in his first AANMI tour, accompanying founder Chad Cannon and contributing to lectures given at institutions throughout Asia such as the Hong Kong Baptist University, the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and The American School in Japan, among others.

Niall received his bachelor's degree in 2017 from the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, where he studied cello performance with Antonio Lysy, and music composition with Ian Krouse and Bruce Broughton.

Niall is of Japanese descent on his mother's side, and of Scottish and Irish descent on his father's. He goes by both his Gaelic and Japanese names, Niall or Tarō respectively.

The Concerts

The May 9 Detroit concert is hosted and cosponsored by St. John Armenian Church at its Cultural Hall (22001 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield MI), with additional cosponsors the Cultural Society of Armenians from Istanbul, and the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School. It starts at 7 p.m., with complimentary admission. For more information, please call 248-505-6159.

The May 11 Boston concert is cosponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge, MA (145 Brattle Street) and starts at 7:30 p.m., with complimentary admission (no RSVP required). For more information, please call 617-924-4455 or email tcadirector@aol.com.

The May 13 Montreal concert will take place at the Tekeyan Center (825 Manoo-gian Street, St.-Laurent, Canada) at \$20 per ticket. For more information, please call 514-747-6680.

VEM will also have several academic and community outreach events in each of the cities it is touring. These include a lecture by UCLA Armenian Music Program Associate Director Dr. Melissa Bilal, with a mini VEM performance at MIT Building 4 (Classroom 231) on May 12 at 12:30 p.m. cosponsored by several MIT departments, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, and TCA, called "Intertwined Legacies: Gomidas Vartabed (1869-1935) and Koharik Gazarovian (1907-1967)." Dr. Bilal also will be giving a lecture at the Vartan Room, again at St. John Armenian Church on Sunday, May 7, immediately after the Divine Liturgy service, titled "Unearthing Mihran Toumajan's Life and Work: A Lecture Dedicated to the Memory of Dickran Toumajan."



Three members of the VEM Ensemble with composer Tigran Mansurian (second from left) at the latter's Yerevan home

Performance Practice, under the guidance of Cynthia Roberts, Paul O'Dette, and Christel Thielmann.

Currently, she is pursuing a Master of Music in Violin Performance under the tutelage of Movses Pogossian and Varty Manouelian at the University of California at Los Angeles, where she is the Teaching Assistant for the Early Music Ensemble and was previously a Teaching Assistant in String Chamber Music.

Kodžas' interest in historical performance has led her to study with Amandine Beyer, Enrico Gatti, Robert Mealy, Bruce Dickey, and Julia Wedman. Her playing has been featured in the Rochester Early Music Festival, the Boston Early Music Festival Fringe Series, and the Berkeley Early Music Festival Fringe Series, and she has performed with Publick Musick (Rochester, NY), LA Camerata (Los Angeles, CA) and Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra (Long Beach, CA). She is a recipient of an Early Music America Summer Scholarship (2022).

Damon Zavala

Growing up, Damon was always surrounded by music. To his parents and to his family, there was a shared understanding about the importance of music. Throughout his childhood, Damon's exposure to music weaved between many genres and subsequently he likes to think this early intervention is reflected in his present broad musical interests.

Herb Alpert School of Music at UCLA. As he embarks on this next chapter in his studies, Damon is hoping to acquire more students to teach, to collaborate within commercial music industry spaces, and to ultimately share with people a diverse range of passion for music.

Niall Tarō Ferguson

A Los Angeles native, Niall Tarō Ferguson is a cellist, composer, and orchestrator. He is currently an active freelance musician, contributing in equal capacity to the worlds of concert and commercial music.

Niall has participated in music festivals such as the Rencontres Musicales Internationales at the International Menuhin Music Academy, Musique à Flaine, and the Borromeo Music Festival in Altdorf, Switzerland. He has studied with cellists Antonio Lysy, Lynn Harrell, Niall Brown, Ben Hong, and Timothy Loo. In Los Angeles, Niall has performed on many of the city's premiere contemporary music series, such as Monday Evening Concerts (M.E.C.), Jacaranda Music, and the Hear Now Festival. As a session cellist, he records regularly on motion picture and TV soundtracks, record dates, and reality shows. Niall has performed with artists such as David Foster, Andrea Bocelli, Shawn Mendes, Miley Cyrus, Olivia Rodrigo, Danny Elfman, and many others.

Niall has studied music composition with composers Mark Carlson, Ian Krouse, and Bruce Broughton. His concert works have