

March 14, 2009



Hasmik Karapetyan charms audiences

Mankерian tucks childhood into a poem



by **Lory Bedikian**

As I've mentioned in previous columns, poets often look back into childhood as a treasure chest of memories. They recall the elation of just being a kid, the freedom it brought, and the perfection of having nothing to do but stare into the buds of flowers or venture off into imaginary lands.

Although there is a tendency to idealize one's childhood, the poems that offer much wisdom and revelation are those courageous enough to look back at those early years and see what actually transpired and how those events may have shaped our lives today. Even if poems are not based on actual happenings, those writings that don't idealize, but instead take a concept and bring truths to the surface have much to offer the reader.

Lebanese-Armenian poet/playwright Shahé Mankерian received his graduate degree in English from California State University, Los Angeles. In 2003, he won both the Erika Mumford Prize and the Daniel Varoujan Award from the New England Poetry Club. *Edifice Wrecked* nominated his poem "She's Hiding My Keys" for the 2004 Pushcart Prize. In 2006, he co-wrote the play "Little Armenia," which debuted at Hollywood's prestigious Fountain Theatre. His work recently has been published in *The Mochila Review* and *Quercus Review*.

Mankерian's poem "We Broke Rulers to Avenge Our Bleeding Knuckles" takes a straightforward look at how young boys may have felt during their school days. Although we know that the poet is from Lebanon and know that many of the references may be borrowed from that landscape of memory, we can't assume this poem is about Mankерian's life *per se*. Instead we can look at the poem as a voice brought back from any child's past. Also, since the poem does not necessarily take place in a particular locale, the verse carries more universality.

We Broke Rulers to Avenge Our Bleeding Knuckles

*They shove us in line
to investigate. My blue uniform
feels tight, stiff. It's only Monday*

*morning; I wonder
if they'll catch us by Friday
afternoon. I can't wiggle*

*my toes in my uncle's hand-
me-down shoes; he sells
vinyl records near the bridge.*

*I hum "Dancing Queen"
to distract myself from*

the probing eye of the principal.

*Mother made me
eat two boiled eggs
this morning; I taste leftovers*

*tucked between the gaps of
my teeth. I close my eyes
to review the stupid poem*

*I memorized the night before.
They could never read
my heart—we broke*

*rulers as altar boys when
we played hooky from church.
We removed the window*

*screen that separated the alley
from the classroom. On Sundays
we were kings, but today*

*we're questioned,
threatened. They pull
my sideburns, but I don't care.*

*I would die first. They can
give me one thousand poems
to memorize, one million standards*

*to write over and over: "I will not
break rulers. I will
not break rulers.*

*I will not break
rulers."*

Mankерian uses – except in the closing two lines – the triplet, tercet, or three-lined stanza, here without a rhyme scheme. Perhaps we can assess that the use of these small, measured stanzas is done strategically to apply linguistic control to an otherwise vast and uncontrollable part of childhood.

We know from the title that a feeling of vengeance fills the boys' hearts who are punished with rulers, and thus must



Shahé Mankерian.

break them. Mankерian presents the voice of the poem as belonging to one of the boys who is being "questioned, / threatened." The poet constructs several sentences in the simple structure of subject-verb-object to bring that childlike voice to life with examples such as "I wonder / if they'll catch us by Friday / afternoon. I can't wiggle / my toes," etc.

Another aspect of the poem, which creates the boy-like voice, is Mankерian's use of interruptive thinking, almost as if the boy is having trouble concentrating on what's at hand. One example of this, among several, occurs in the fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas. The boy is humming to distract himself from "the probing eye of the principal." Suddenly the thought jumps to "Mother made me / eat two boiled eggs / this morning." Immediately following this moment the boy "close[s] [his] eyes / to review the stupid poem / [he] memorized the night before." The movement of the thought pattern cleverly mimics that of a boy with a short attention span.

An imaginative moment occurs when the boy claims "On Sundays / we were kings." Mankерian goes even further and uses hyperbole, or exaggeration, to suggest the angst of this young speaker who vows he doesn't care: "They can / give me one thousand poems / to memorize, one million standards / to write over and over." Nothing will affect this young trooper.

It's necessary to notice the way Mankерian closes this poem. He repeats three times the sentence, "I will not break rulers." So much happens at this moment in the poem. We can say it mimics the boy writing this promise over and over again, it echoes the voice of a boy who may repeat himself for emphasis, and it gives us that childlike quality again. (It reminds me of the famous "there's no place like home," repeated in the *Wizard of Oz*.)

More importantly, Mankерian cleverly – there's no other way to say it – breaks the lines at various points, after "not," "will," "rulers," and "break." If we stress the end of each line or briefly pause with eyes and ears at each point, the meaning of each line takes on a different significance, thus informing us of different ways of reading into the poem. Stressing "I will" has a different emphasis than ending the line on "I will not break," which can almost take on a spiritual realm.

Poems such as this one remind us of some of the more difficult and annoying aspects of being a child, the vulnerabilities especially brought on during times where punishments were harsh and courage needed to be part of our daily nourishment. Poems like this tell us that whether we followed the rules or not, when we were kids, we can always look back and learn from our flawless or battered knuckles. ☞

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"We Broke Rulers to Avenge Our Bleeding Knuckles," is printed with permission of the author.

"Hotline" returns to the airwaves on US-Armenia TV Friday nights

BURBANK, Calif. - The English-language "Hotline" talk show debuted last Friday night at midnight (Pacific Time) on US-Armenia TV, which broadcasts in Southern California on over-the-air, antenna TV (KSCI 18.5), on Charter and Time-Warner cable, on satellite in the United States via Globecast, and in Europe and Armenia on the Hotbird satellite.

For the past four years, program host **Paul Chaderjian** has interviewed more than a hundred guests who were working or were involved with projects in Armenia and the Armenian diaspora.

"The interview show idea came to life when Armenia TV asked me to go to Armenia and help with the coverage of the 90th Anniversary of the Genocide in 2005," said Chaderjian, who is a former ABC News writer-producer and one of the former hosts of the annual Armenia Fund Thanksgiving Day telethon. "I helped Armenia TV set up a live transmission to CNN, The Associated Press, and a few European news agencies," said Chaderjian. "We wanted

to show the world how important the commemoration and Genocide recognition are to Armenia and Armenians around the world. What we did was set up a satellite feed with the help of the Foreign Ministry and broadcast the commemoration ceremonies, interviews with scholars who had attended the Ultimate Crime symposium, soundbites from those at the commemoration, archival photos, and footage shot from a helicopter."

CNN, Current TV, and The Associated Press were among those who used the news feed and broadcast the Genocide commemoration story during their global broadcasts and news feeds to affiliate stations on April 24 and 25.

Since then Chaderjian has filed at least a dozen reports from Yerevan to CNN International, including coverage of former Prime Minister Andranik Margarian's visit to the United Nations IT Summit in Tunisia, the ground-breaking of the Cafesjian Center for the Arts in Yerevan, as well as stories about Sumgait massacre anni-



versary and cultural exchange programs between the United States and Armenia.

"When I was in Yerevan in '05," said Chaderjian, "Armenia TV's Bagrat Sargsyan and I were talking about creating a venue on television where we could talk to guests in English and reach non-Armenian-speaking audiences. That's how 'Hotline' was born."

Hotline airs on US-Armenia TV on Fridays at midnight (Saturday 12:00 A.M. Pacific) and repeats on Mondays 8:00 A.M. The station is also streamed live on the Internet. ☞

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Armenia's Hasmik Karapetyan charms audiences around the world with her distinctive style

by Nyree Derderian

One of the brightest stars of Armenian pop music, singer-songwriter Hasmik Karapetyan exudes talent, confidence, and elegance. At 31, she already has considerable experience and shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon. With her latest hit single, "Kraki Par" (Fire Dance) in heavy rotation on Armenian TV and radio, she is currently recording her fourth album and keeping up a busy concert schedule – and all the while managing to keep a good head on her shoulders.



Photo: Arvin Kocharian.

Born and raised in Yerevan, Karapetyan did not have any early ambitions to become a singer. As a child, she wanted to study foreign languages, especially English, but her music teachers saw a talent in her that they urged her to cultivate. "I went to music school, studying piano, and when I was 13 I realized that I could compose my own melodies," says the charismatic singer. "That's when it started." At 18, she got involved with Ardzagank Studio, a recording studio in Yerevan that helps new artists find their sound and begin their careers in music. For the next few years, she would participate in theatrical productions, musicals, and contests, where she would compose and perform her own songs.

In 2000, the young artist recorded her first album, "Rain." The recording was done in Los Angeles, where she lived and worked for two years. It produced such hits as "Andzrev" and "Mna Ayttegh" and propelled Hasmik Karapetyan into the world of Armenian pop music. "At that point there was no turning back," she says. "One day I woke up and realized that the stage and singing would be my way of life."

Before departing for the United States, she had started studying voice at the Yerevan State Conservatory, but upon her return, she was so immersed in her career – composing, collaborating with other writers, recording, and performing – that it would have been impossible for her to continue.

While some artists would worry that moving from the United States back to Armenia might put a strain on their career ambitions, Hasmik Karapetyan had absolutely no need to worry. In the coming years, all her hard work would pay off and her popularity would grow both in Armenia and all over the diaspora. Upon the invitation of different Armenian communities, she has given concerts in Australia, the Czech Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and Spain, to name a few.

Of her many hits, "Yes Gnum em Sirelis" and "Ays Bemum" hold a special place in Karapetyan's heart. "I really found my own voice, my own style through these songs," she says. And while pop stars seem to be a dime a dozen these days, it is indeed true that Hasmik Karapetyan has a unique sound and distinctive style. "I have my own signature, but I can't describe my style in one word," she says. "It's just mine.



Hasmik Karapetyan. Photo: Vigen Mnoyan.

I feel it in my soul and I express it through my art. I'm honest in my art. I'm not afraid to sing about what's going on in my life and what's going on in the world."

While the multitalented artist loves to challenge herself and continues to compose much of her own material, she sees the value in collaborating with other talented artists and loves the different perspectives and depth that is added to her music because of it. Over the years, she has collaborated with big names in the Armenian music industry including director Hrach Keshishyan and singer-songwriter Avet Barseghyan.

Her fourth album, which she is work-

ing diligently to release as soon as possible, includes collaboration with Canadian-born producer, DerHova (Harout Der Hovagimian). She is clearly excited about the result. "The song is fast but melodious. I'm very happy with it. We're just working on the video," she says, adding with a coy smile, "But I don't want to reveal too much."

Having lived in the United States for two years, and traveled to many countries for performances, Hasmik Karapetyan feels a strong bond with Armenians in the diaspora. "I know it can be hard living away from your homeland," she says, "But despite the distance, I hope to form connections with my music." #



Vardan Azatyan, revolutionizing art criticism



by
**Christopher
Atamian**

This week instead of covering an artist or exhibit, I spoke with Vardan Azatyan, a fascinating and knowledgeable young scholar of Armenian art history currently teaching at Columbia University for the spring semester.

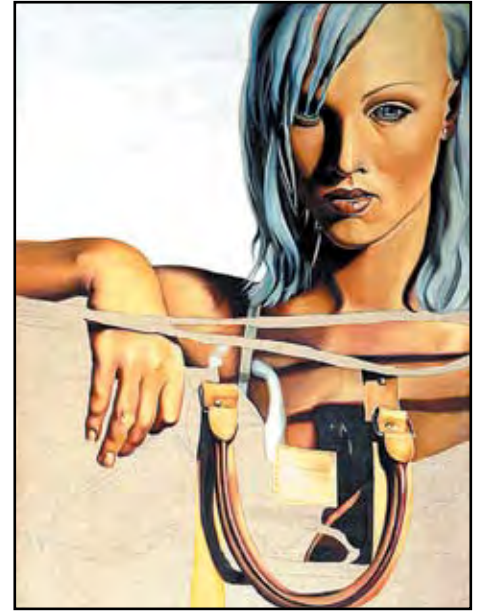
Twenty-eight-year-old **Vardan Azatyan** is quietly helping to revolutionize Armenian art history and art criticism. Up until now Azatyan has concentrated his research on theories and methodologies of art history as well as contemporary art in Armenia. He is currently the Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Columbia University, where he is teaching a course called Politics of World Art History: the Case of Armenian Medieval Art, a contextual and methodological exploration of the histories of art history which concentrates on the representation of Armenian medieval art in art history survey texts from the nineteenth century to the present. Among other topics, the course touches upon issues of nationalism, orientalism, imperialism, cultural politics and educational policies. Azatyan's work is important because of the change that it is helping to bring to Armenian art and Armenian culture in general. I sat down with Vardan recently at the Hungarian Coffee Shop to discuss his work and to talk about an important art movement in Armenia known as "The 3rd Floor."

CA: In your course description you write that in art-historical terms "Armenian medieval art is a European and Russian construct." What do you mean by this? Did the Cold War have play a role in this?

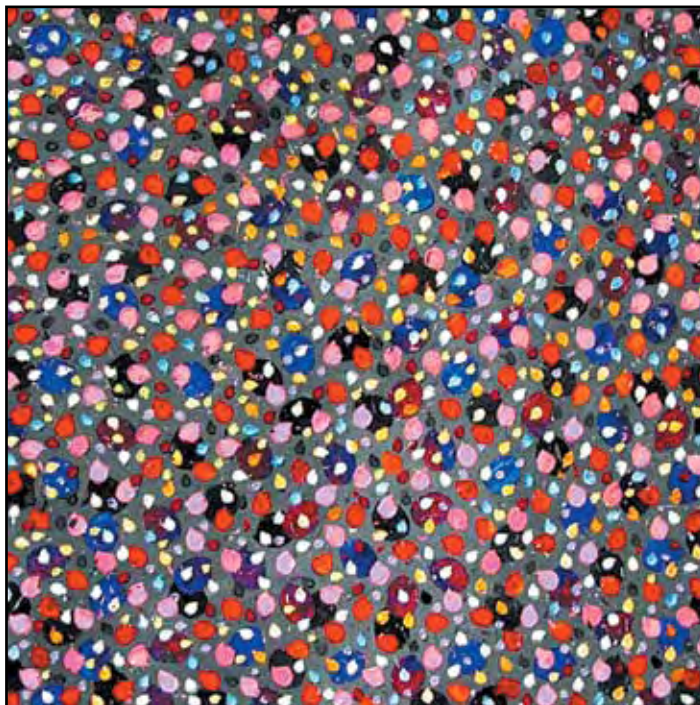
VA: The material culture of medieval Armenia was first conceived as "art" in terms of being part of the "history of art" by European, most importantly German art historians in the first half of the 19th century in the context of the emergence of the discipline of art history in that country. Later Russians carried on what is known as the "scientific study" of medieval Armenian artifacts as art historical objects. There was also some limited interest in medieval Armenia as exemplified in travelers' accounts. Armenians themselves started to conceive of their medieval culture in art historical terms at the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in the context of what can be called the "de-medievalization" of Armenians marked by the emergence of political parties and Armenian nationalism. This process was carried out by Armenian intellectuals who as a rule have been educated in Europe and most importantly in Germany. The case of the first Armenian art historian, **Garegin Hovsepyan**, is a telling example. Educated in Germany, he was as also a high-



3rd Floor, Official Art Has Died / Hail to the Artists' Union from Netherworld, happening, 1988. Photo courtesy Henrik Khachatryan.



Karine Matsakyan, Vogue Model, 28 x 20, Oil on Canvas, 1994.



Above left: David Kareyan. Above: Karine Matsakyan, Untitled, 20 x 14.5, Oil on Canvas. Left: Ashot - Ashot, afactum, mixed technique, 80x80 cm.

ranking clergyman. With Hovsepyan, Armenian art history transitioned from medieval discourse to that of modern nationalist discourse. (Hovsepyan actually participated in the battle of Sardarapat in 1918.)

CA: Vardan, can you tell me in a few sentences what your research entails, i.e., what are your areas of interest and specialization?

VA: I am interested in theories and methodologies of art history as well as in the histories and theories of contemporary art. One could call my work "a philosophically inspired critical history of art history."

CA: Elsewhere you write that Armenian art in academic circles is "virtually synonymous with Medieval art." Why is

this so? Can you elaborate, please?

VA: Armenian art history emerged as something essentially connected to Medieval Armenia, as something that sanctifies medieval Armenia as *culture* which was a self-enactment of modern European interest towards Armenia in the guise of a nationalist rhetoric of national self-realization. So the common habit of talking about Medieval Armenian Art and Armenian Art interchangeably is a result of this cultural nationalist sanctification of Medieval Armenia. This situation changed to a certain extent in Soviet times when Armenians in the Soviet Union engaged in the construction of a modern Armenia. But this project... collapsed with the Soviet Union and Armenia fell back to its good old strategy

of nationalist self-orientation. This is also evident in Armenia by the presentation of Western mainstream museum exhibitions. Hence we had *Sacred Armenia* at the Louvre in 2007. So my work in part tries to show that "Armenian medieval art" itself is a modern construct and thus to undermine the art historical sanctification of Armenian medieval art.

CA: What is the situation in Armenia for both art criticism and art historical research? How do these interact with the contemporary art scene in general?

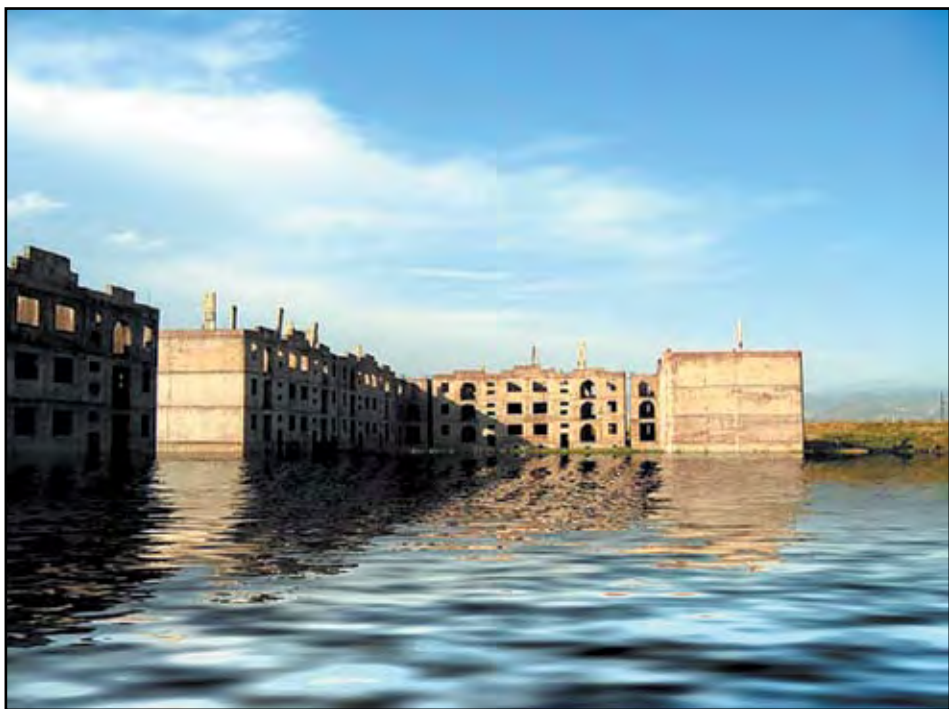
VA: Four years ago myself and a group of colleagues and friends initiated the *Association for Art Critics in Armenia*... which is now the Armenian branch of International Association of Art Critics (AICA). In this sense there is a direct relationship [with] the international context: books are published and conferences (both international and local), exhibitions, educational programs are organized. As to art historical research, in 2006 with the help from my present

Continued on page C5

studio visit



ACT, Art Demonstration, collective action, 1995. Photo courtesy Nazareth Karoyan.



Vahram Aghasyan, Ghost city, 2005, C-Print, 12 pieces, 2008.

Continued from page C4

and former students we established an online art history journal called *Revisor*. As its name suggests the issue at stake is that of rethinking the current knowledge on the history of Armenian art. Conceptually it is to initiate methodological and historiographic research on the history of Armenian art as well as to examine the fates of modernism in Armenia, specifically what we call Soviet-Armenian Modernism. It attempts to cope with the current problems of art historical research and its effects on the history of Armenian art.

CA: Do people in Armenia read critics such as **Meyer Schapiro**, **Clement Greenberg**, et al. in Armenia today?

VA: The younger generation of art historians and critics connected to AICA-Armenia and *Revisor* do read them as well as many other more contemporary authors as well. Recently my former student and colleague, **Anna Galstyan** defended her Ph.D. thesis on **Arshile Gorky** in American Modernist art criticism. In it she discusses Greenberg and Schapiro's interpretations of Gorky. Her chapter on Arshile Gorky in Greenberg's criticism can be found online in Armenian at www.revisor.am.

CA: Is the art scene in contemporary Armenia prospering and productive according to you? What are the most interesting developments that readers should know about?

VA: Like every art scene, contemporary art in Armenia has its problems. The issue is not with problems and their eradication, but with the possibilities for addressing them – which is precisely the task of art criticism. To summarize, my work tries to help create conditions which will enable Armenian art to be revisited and critiqued.

CA: Can you describe how contemporary artists in Armenia are re-orienting themselves? Where are their influences coming from? Are they producing “original” art or is it still controlled and/or derivative as it was perhaps in Soviet days?

VA: Contemporary art in Armenia is caught in between three larger discourses which shape what can be called “Armenian reality” – the Soviet heritage, the influence of Russia, and the processes of globalization intertwined with nationalist rhetoric of constructing the New Armenia. Ideally contemporary art discourses in Armenia would occupy critical position towards all these three discourses which would put them both

in a utopian as well as subversive position, but this is an extremely hard task to accomplish. However, in the context of the emergence of the new image of Armenia – on the basis of the alliance between globalization and nationalism – contemporary art becomes something that can contribute to this image and thus it is being co-opted by power discourses... but there still remains room to challenge them.

CA: What is the “3rd Floor” Movement? Who were the artists involved and why was it important?

VA: 3rd Floor was an artistic-cultural movement that emerged in Yerevan in late 1980s in the context of **Gorbachev's** Perestroika. Its first exhibition was held in the conference hall of the Artists Union of Armenia which was located in the third floor, hence the name of the movement. It was based on earlier contemporary art practices in Armenia and properly speaking lasted till 1990 when a split occurred between its major representatives which included **Arman Grigoryan**, **Kiki**, **Nazareth Karoyan**, **Karine Matsakyan**, **Ashot Ashot**. It was an extremely heterogeneous movement both in terms of artistic agendas and artistic forms. To some of its practitioners, like Grigoryan, its main value is stylistic, since according to him 3rd Floor developed a new, contemporary imagery and thus brought Armenian art to the contemporary level. Others, like Karoyan, find it an essentially cultural movement which marked the postmodern turn in Armenian art and culture. To me its main importance is that it made contemporary art in Armenia a public issue...

CA: In an essay titled “Public Spheres: Contested Monuments, Meanings, Identities, and Spaces,” which you presented in 2005 in England at the University of Plymouth, you use the term “parasitic” to describe the strategy of 3rd floor artists. Can you explain?

VA: What I meant by the term is that they made use of the official space and yet, attempted to criticize the very official discourse which gave them the opportunity to show their works. However, I also mentioned in that speech

that the critique of the Soviet regime in the context of Perestroika was a task undertaken by the regime itself; this is what Perestroika was all about. That is why I call 3rd Floor “the avant-garde of Perestroika”.

CA: Can you explain the meaning and importance of the term *Hamasteghtsakan Art*?

VA: The term “Hamasteghtsakan arvest” was coined by Nazareth Karoyan in early 1990s. On the one hand, the term means “art that is made together” which to Karoyan was one of the important aspects of 3rd Floor and which accounted for its postmodern character in contrast the modernist obsession with authorship. It is also a literal translation of the term “conceptual art.” This fusion of “collectively made art” and “conceptual art” marks more the shift in Karoyan's own critical concerns, than the art produced by the 3rd Floor, since conceptual artists in Armenia have always felt uneasy with 3rd Floor's aestheticizing agendas.

CA: What was the ACT group?

VA: ACT was a short-lived group of young conceptual artists that emerged in 1994 which included **David Kareyan**, **Vahram Aghasyan**, **Diana Hakobyan**, **Hrach Armenakyan**, **Narek Avetisyan**. They wanted to counteract what they considered as the megalomaniac subject-positions of the 3rd Floor artists and the “translational art” they produced. ACT was the first post-Soviet avant-garde art group in Armenia and it consciously aligned itself with the course of the newly emerged state. They emphasized the active sociopolitical role of artists; according to them the citizen and the artist should not be differentiated, hence the crucial role of the notion of “act” in their agenda. On the other hand, they strived for what they called “pure creation,” i.e., not art for art's sake, but art that is distilled from art itself.

CA: Can you comment on the distinction or differences between diasporan and Armenian artists and what type of meaningful dialogue can exist between these two entities? Have institutions like NPAK/ACCEA made a contribution in this arena?

VA: There exists what I call a mnemonic antagonism between diasporan and Armenian contexts in relation to the so-called “Armenian tradition.” I don't want to homogenize both discourses, but in general terms the attitude of the Armenian diaspora towards national/cultural traditions is quite different from the position of those who grew up in Soviet Armenia. If the national/cultural tradition was a kernel preserving national identity in a displaced diasporic condition, the Soviet Armenian artistic avant-gardes constantly strove to get rid of their “national tradition” and “national identity” intertwined with the Soviet totalitarian ideology. Again, to put it roughly the first is informed by *identity politics*, the second by *ideological critique*. Readdressing this very antagonism together might be one of the platforms of collaboration between the two contexts, if in fact there is such a need to collaborate.

CA: Any closing thoughts?

VA: Thank you for your thought-provoking and insightful questions. As Wittgenstein noted somewhere, rightly put questions, to an extent, imply their own answers.

Mosaic III: Hamazkayin's latest musical installment rides on pure magic

by **Ishkhan Jinbashian**

Evolve or perish. That was the operating mantra when Levon Shant and Nigol Aghpalian were laying the foundations of what would eventually become Hamazkayin, in the Cairo of the late 1920s. In the wake of the 1915 Catastrophe and the loss of the Armenian republic, Shant and Aghpalian understood that the paradigm of national regeneration had to shift gears in the fledgling diaspora, focusing not just on physical survival but cultural regrouping.

The Hamazkayin vision would go on to fuel a minor renaissance, mainly in the Middle East, yielding a string of landmark institutions and programs such as Beirut's Nshan Palanjian Jemaran, top-notch publishing houses, theatrical troupes, and dance companies, as well as Armenian-studies programs.

This year, as Hamazkayin turns 80, the initial mantra resonates as urgently. In the age of micro-blogging, YouTube, and the iPod, not too many people are aching to read Vorpuni or Oshagan, especially in the Western communities of the diaspora. And of the Armenian schools dotting the California landscape, you'd be hard-pressed to find one that has produced a single poet or novelist writing in the Armenian language.

So where does Hamazkayin go from here? Part of the answer, and perhaps the most essential, lies in the compact forged by the organization's founders. Illustrious men of letters, versed in diplomacy, and possessing a wide-angle view of history, both Shant and Aghpalian insisted on opening Armenian culture to the world. They knew that no culture could develop in a cocoon, that cultural vibrancy is first and foremost a function of cross-pollination. Thus it was no accident, for instance, that Beirut's Jemaran was founded clearly on the ideals of the French Enlightenment, and many among its faculty were educated at famed European universities.

While Hamazkayin, unlike scores of other Armenian cultural organizations, has long distinguished itself by embracing the principle of re-creating, not merely *preserving*, culture, today it stands at a disorienting crossroads. Hamazkayin in the Middle East and Armenia may still squeeze some juice out of the organization's well-established educational institutions and cultural programs, but the situation in the West, from Paris to the Americas, is rather dire, and has been so for the past three decades.

Ask any California Hamazkayin board member, and they'll tell you what troubles them is the youth – that is to say, the glaring absence thereof. What can possibly be done to draw the youth in, to bring them into and making them stay in the fold? Literature and hence language have failed in this respect, simply because the Armenian schools of the West have failed to liberate the Armenian language from the 19th century – from



Sebu Simonian's band. Photo: Tamar Jaghalian.

its ceremonial, overdramatic, dogmatic baggage – and make it a normal, natural inhabitant of the Los Angeles street. The theater has done better, but only marginally. One would be tempted to say that the Hamazkayin Western Region's bread and butter, so far, have been traditional music and dance, though events showcasing these art forms become rarer with each passing year. That's because an organization of Hamazkayin's ambitions is painfully aware of the fact that you can't go on staging folk-dance routines and Komitas and Ganachian, as wonderful as these are, and expect to titillate the young. So it is that, a few years ago, Hamazkayin proposed its own, quite risky, rescue package of sorts, by launching the now-annual Mosaic event – and, in the process, once again rediscovering its dormant penchant for innovation.

Why risky? Because when, after thriving on the classics for so long, a cultural organization suddenly sets out to present cutting-edge stuff, it risks alienating the base. Hamazkayin made the move with exemplary poise, but also covered its back, by peppering the Mosaic concerts with just enough mainstream material to still appeal to aficionados of the conventional.

Has it been worth it? Every bit.

Beautiful crowd

Well, not just the crowd, but the phenomenon itself: the phenomenon of filling up a concert hall to the rafters, in *this* godforsaken economy, of having the 25-to-50-something demographic converge for a musical event that bucks any number of trends in today's mostly stale Armenian-pop scene.

Need I say that the concert, at downtown L.A.'s Zipper Hall, began a good



Lory Tatoulian and Voki Kalfayan. Photo: Tamar Jaghalian.

hour late? Folks, when you announce that you will start a concert at 6, the reasonable and rightful assumption is that you will in fact do so. How about you next buck the trend in this regard as well?

Thankfully, the impatient audience

was kept busy by the diabolically gifted comedy team of **Lory Tatoulian** and **Voki Kalfayan**, masters of ceremonies and clowns extraordinaire, who throughout the evening taunted audi-

Continued on page C7

music



Above left: Jivan Gasparyan Jr. jamming with a fellow musician. Above right: Lory Tatoulian charming the audience. Far left: Matilda Tavanian. Photos: Nora Yacoubian. Left: Aren Emirz on guitar and Viken Tarpinian. Photo: Tamar Jaghalian. Below: The diabolically gifted comedy team of Lory Tatoulian and Voki Kalfayan. Photo: Nora Yacoubian.

Continued from page C6

ence members, recited outrageous doggerels, performed sundry stand-up skits, and otherwise goofed around to their hearts' content. My only quibble is that their act could've been more effective had they kept it to a minimum, so as not to make the concert be confused with a full-blown comedy show – which it wasn't, nor should've been.

Mosaic III's first musical act, **Vahagn Turgutyan** and his band, inspired the strange sense that the flamenco guitar might've well been invented somewhere in the Armenian highlands. Turgutyan, a virtuoso guitarist trained in Spain, also demonstrated that Armenian music and jazz can coexist seamlessly.

In a high-energy set punctuated by his intricate, lovely riffs and saxophonist **Zane Musa's** soaring solos, the quartet presented a well-balanced sampling of Turgutyan's original compositions and reworkings of Armenian folk standards. Crisp, clean, and atmospheric, the material put a fresh spin on flamenco jazz without sounding derivative. The quartet was also joined by dudukist **Djivan Gasparyan, Jr.**, whose turn added an elegant if plaintive sheen to the Armenian melodies.

Before the next act, **Sebu** and his band,



Continued on page C8

Mosaic III: Hamazkayin's latest musical installment rides on pure magic

Continued from page C7

took the stage, a poetic interlude was provided by spoken-word artist **Matilda Tavanian**. Hamazkayin has always had a weakness for mixing media in its events – say, a lecture complemented by a piano performance, or a book presentation with an operatic number thrown in. For a moment forgetting the usual incongruity of such couplings, would it be out of line to hope that those sighing, didactic poems about leaving one's homeland and so on are filed away already? Note to Hamazkayin: the young generation, and many, many others in the not-so-young bracket, don't care for this stuff, and for good reasons, esthetic and textual alike. What does have a chance of flying is material like Tavanian's parting piece, a charming, light-heartedly ironic poem which she delivered with her signature passion and confidence.

Despite his young age, singer-songwriter-pianist Sebu has a long string of musical accomplishments under his belt, and it shows amply in his performances. At Mosaic III, Sebu and his band performed a set of lush rock songs and novel renditions of Armenian classics such as "Kilikia."

Sebu's original compositions are marked by graceful melodies, highly inventive arrangements and lyrics, and a surefooted accent on rhythm and beat. The effect at the concert was further intensified by Sebu's adventurous yet smooth vocal stylings, reflecting his classical training as well as experience fronting a number of rock bands.

Soul food plus an epiphany

The story of the two-man band **ARTAR** is a little study in the surreal ways in which Armenian culture manages to burgeon in some improbable corners of the world, despite the odds.

Once upon a time there was **HARTAR**, an acoustic-folk duo consisting of **Vicken Tarpinian** and **Harout Bezjian**. Years after their collaboration, Tarpinian received a phone call from a young German-Armenian, **Aren Emirze**, who said he had discovered a cassette tape of **HARTAR** that belonged to his late father. As Aren, a guitar player, had grown up listening to **HARTAR**'s music with his father's encouragement, he now wished to join Tarpinian for a musical journey of their own. That phone call eventually led to the formation of **ARTAR** and Tarpinian's comeback.

At Mosaic III, Tarpinian sang in his beloved voice, which has the ability both to be soothing and to communicate something of the masculine verve and dignity of our bygone freedom fighters. With Emirze's lovely guitar work (and also vocals) and driven by polished arrangements, **ARTAR** performed several renditions of folk favorites. The duo concluded its set with a couple of songs written by Emirze's father.

And then there was **Lavach** (pronounced "lavash" – yes, as in the bread).

The French band, whose musicians are variously of Armenian, Polish, Congolese, and Mexican origin, hails from La Goutte d'Or, a culturally diverse, dynamic Paris neighborhood where the



The French band Lavach, whose musicians are of Armenian, Polish, Congolese, and Mexican origin, hails from La Goutte d'Or. Photo: Tamar Jaghalian.

words "prim" and "proper" don't necessarily apply. But this much is nowhere near enough to suspect the exuberant, drop-dead-gorgeous leaps of imagination that Lavach is capable of.

Fronted by singer and accordionist **Sevan**, the band gleefully foils any attempt to categorize it. It professes neither linguistic nor musical loyalties per se, diving now into Arabic, now into

Greek or Armenian, and infusing the lot with rhythmic and harmonic vocabularies that may include waltz, reggae, samba, klezmer, and others.

But whereas in the hands of less adept musicians such feats might turn into caricature, Lavach has an amazing grasp of its references and knows how to calibrate them, achieving an aural landscape that sounds absolutely true

and is nothing short of revelatory.

At Mosaic III, while Sevan let her powerful, bistro-chanteuse voice loose and the band obliged, with exquisite flourishes of violin, trombone, drums, and Sevan's accordion, one caught yet another glimpse of just how far Armenian music could go.

A mosaic it was, offered generously by a Hamazkayin in top form again. ¶

The story of the silver box, the story of us

by Maria Titizian

Maral and **Ardash Medzadourian** of New Jersey own and operate a jewelry store and gift shop. One day a woman came into their shop to sell them an antique silver box she had stumbled upon at a garage sale. When Ardash saw the intricately carved silver box, he immediately purchased it from the woman.

The reason for his interest was the Armenian inscription on it. On an oval silver plate on one side of the box is pictured a hand of a woman and a man shaking hands. At the top of the plate, it reads P.V. Makruhi, indicating perhaps the name of the owner of the silver box and on the bottom it reads - 1910 January 30, Van. On the other side is another silver plate which appears to have a picture of what has traditionally been come to be known as Mother Armenia.

"I don't think the lady that brought us the box to sell knows anything about Armenians or our history," Maral Medzadourian said. "But we love it and treasure it and can't believe that almost a century later an Armenian is going to own it once again."

Nobody knows the story of the silver box, what it was used for, who the owner was and how or why it ended up being sold at a garage sale in New Jersey.



A century later, a piece of Armenian history finds its way back into the hands of an Armenian.

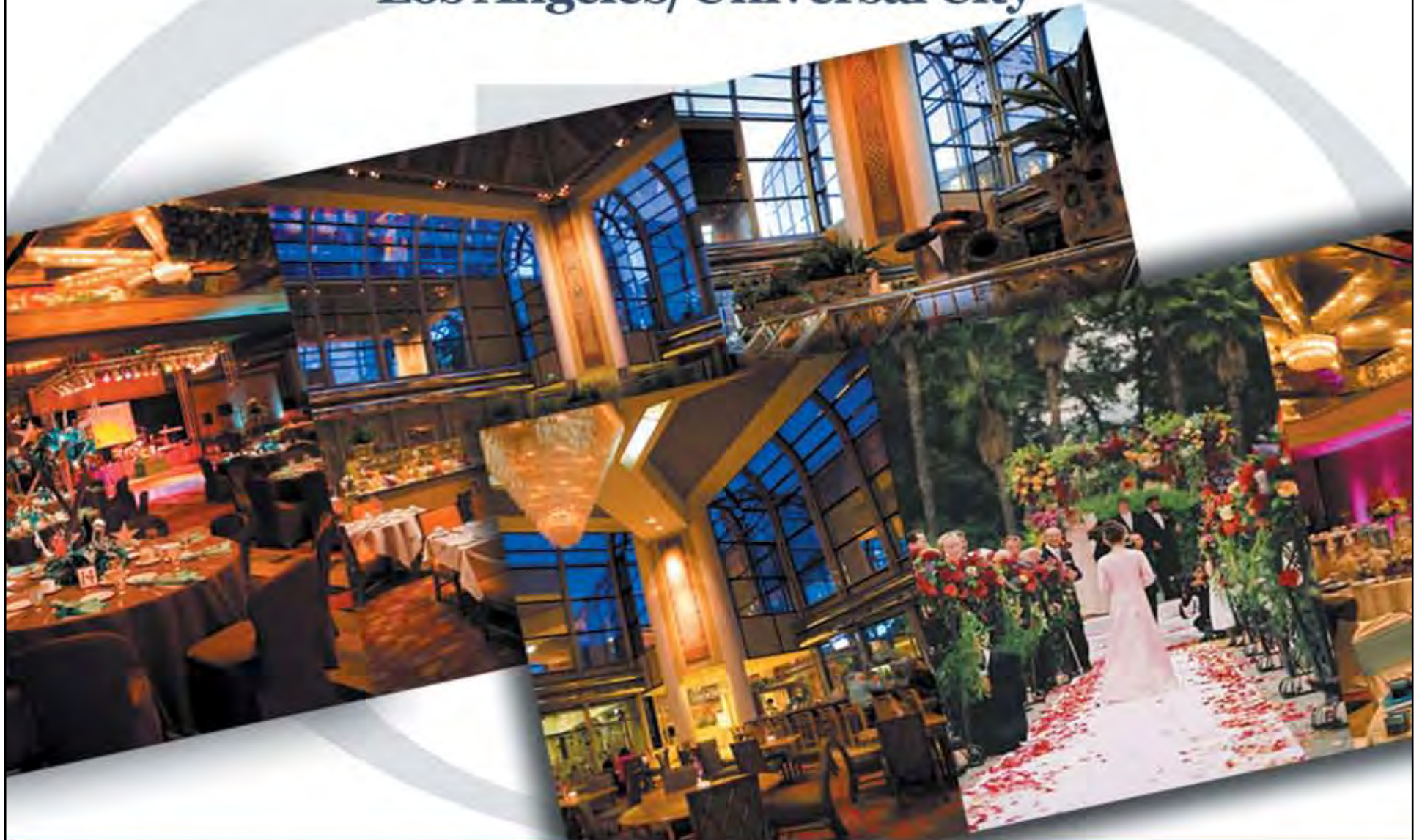
Perhaps the piece itself isn't very valuable, in terms of its age or workmanship. However for the Medzadourians it's more than an antique silver ornament. For them it's about the history of them, of their people, of Armenia itself. Maral is convinced that the journey of this silver box is full of symbolism and that it is so indicative of how the Armenian people have forever been wanderers, a reason for our survival. "I tell my children that this is why the Armenian race will never die," Maral says. ¶





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		16 March	17 March	18 March	19 March	20 March	21 March	22 March
		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
EST	PST							
10:00 PM	1:00 AM	Deal or No Deal	CLONE (Serial)	CLONE (Serial)	CLONE (Serial)	CLONE (Serial)	CLONE (Serial)	Deal or No Deal
11:00 PM	2:00 AM	Fathers & Sons	Vrijarou (Serial)	Vrijarou (Serial)	Vrijarou (Serial)	Vrijarou (Serial)	Vrijarou (Serial)	Century
11:30 PM	2:30 AM							Armenia Diaspora
12:00 AM	3:00 AM	Love E Lee	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)
1:00 AM	4:00 AM	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)
2:00 AM	5:00 AM	TV Duel	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Discovery
2:30 AM	5:30 AM							Century
3:00 AM	6:00 AM	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Armenia Diaspora
3:30 AM	6:30 AM	Mult	Mult	Mult	Mult	Mult	Mult	Fathers & Sons
4:00 AM	7:00 AM	Yo Yo	Yo Yo	Yo Yo	Yo Yo	Yo Yo	Yo Yo	
4:30 AM	7:30 AM	News	News	News	News	News	News	News
5:00 AM	8:00 AM	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian
5:30 AM	8:30 AM							
6:00 AM	9:00 AM	Directions With Rafi Manoukian	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Fathers & Sons
6:30 AM	9:30 AM							
7:00 AM	10:00 AM	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Armenian Teletime
7:30 AM	10:30 AM	Hayer	Hayer	Hayer	Hayer	Hayer	Hayer	
8:00 AM	11:00 AM	Bari Aravod	Bari Aravod	Bari Aravod	Bari Aravod	Bari Aravod	Bari Aravod	Armenian
8:30 AM	11:30 AM							Movie
9:30 AM	12:30 PM	News	News	News	News	News	News	
10:00 AM	01:00 PM	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yerkvoryak (Serial)	Yere 1 (ye:re:van)
10:30 AM	01:30 AM							Cool Program
11:00 AM	02:00 PM	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)	7 Mekhq (Serial)
12:00 PM	03:00 PM	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	TV Duel
12:30 PM	03:30 PM	Mult	Mult	Mult	Mult	Mult	Mult	
01:00 PM	04:00 PM	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	Love E Lee
01:30 PM	04:30 PM	When Stars are Dancing	When Stars are Dancing	When Stars are Dancing	douk Yeteroum Ek	douk Yeteroum Ek	Yere 1 (ye:re:van)	
02:00 PM	05:00 PM	Live from America	Live from America	Live from America	Lragroghakan	Lragroghakan	Cool Program	A Drop Of Honey
02:30 PM	05:30 PM	News	News	News	News	News	News Editorial	
03:00 PM	06:00 PM	CLONE (Serial)	CLONE (Serial)	CLONE (Serial)	CLONE (Serial)	CLONE (Serial)	Discovery	Deal or No Deal
03:30 AM	06:30 AM							
04:00 PM	07:00 PM	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Unlucky Happiness (Serial)	Century	Blef
04:30 AM	07:30 AM							
05:00 PM	08:00 PM	Vrijarou (Serial)	Vrijarou (Serial)	Vrijarou (Serial)	Vrijarou (Serial)	Vrijarou (Serial)	Deal or No Deal	My Big, Fat Armenian Wedding
05:30 PM	08:30 PM							
06:00 PM	09:00 PM	News	News	News	News	News	Armenia Diaspora	
06:30 PM	09:30 PM	Gyanki Keene (Serial)	Gyanki Keene (Serial)	Gyanki Keene (Serial)	Pakhousd (Serial)	Pakhousd (Serial)	Vrijarou 1	Directions With Rafi Manoukian
07:00 PM	10:00 PM						Vrijarou 2	When Stars Are Dancing
07:30 PM	10:30 PM	Tonight Show	Tonight Show	Tonight Show	Yere 1	Cool Program	Vrijarou 3	
08:00 PM	11:00 PM	11 (Serial)	11 (Serial)	11 (Serial)	Live From America	Live From America	Vrijarou 4	
08:30 PM	11:30 PM	News	News	News	News	News	Vrijarou 5	
09:00 PM	12:00 AM	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian	Bari Luys with Stepan Partamian		CUBE
09:30 PM	12:30 AM							

Museum-hopping in Yerevan

A great way to spend a rainy day



by Nyree Abrahamian

YEREVAN – When it comes to history, arts and culture, few cities in the world hold a candle to Yerevan. It boasts close to 50 museums and galleries – remarkable for a city of its size – that are becoming increasingly visitor-friendly. Most offer tours in at least three languages (Armenian, English, and Russian) and are very accessible to locals and tourists alike. Admission is typically 500 drams (roughly \$1.25) and guided tours are reasonably priced, especially if you’re with a group.

With such a wealth of cultural treasures packed into such a dense area, museum-hopping is one of my favorite rainy-day activities. With smaller museums and galleries, three per day is usually good. Anything more can be overkill. Some of the larger ones, like the State History Museum and the National Gallery, can take up an entire day on their own.

On a recent cultural date with Yerevan, I checked out a few gems: the Museum of Folk Art, the Martiros Saryan House-Museum, and the Sergei Parajanov House-Museum. In a day, I jumped from the intricate embroideries of Marash, to the colorful world of a patriotic painter, to a house filled with collages that piece together the life of a creative genius. And who said rainy days were boring? Here is a glimpse of all three of them.



Sergei Parajanov House-Museum. Photos: Nyree Abrahamian.

Museum of Folk Art

The Museum of Folk Art, located on the roundabout at the end of Abovyan Street, has a rich and interesting history. It was founded in 1978, but existed unofficially since the 1930s. It started out as a makeshift guild for the hundreds of artists who had fled to Yerevan from Western Armenia during the Genocide. Since each region of Armenia has its unique styles of embroidery, carpet weaving and other crafts, it was important after the devastation of the Genocide to ensure that these crafts would not be lost. So it was founded on the principle of preserving not only the remnants, but the practice of Armenian folk art. And to this day, the building serves a similar function. It’s not just a museum, but a hub for contemporary inheritors of Armenia’s rich folk art traditions.

Each hall is dedicated to a different craft, such as woodworking, embroidery, rug and carpet weaving, and metalwork. While many of the pieces displayed are

from the museum’s early days as an artists’ guild, or centuries-old authentic works from Western Armenia, what I love about this museum is that it highlights the works of contemporary artists. “We want to show that Armenian folk art is not a thing of the past. It’s very much alive,” says director, **Saro Saroughanyan**.

Recently, with the help of generous sponsorships, the Museum of Folk Art has opened a school of embroidery in Yerevan. The works of Armenia’s modern folk artists who work through the museum are frequently displayed in galleries throughout the United States and Europe, and have even been featured in exhibitions in Japan and Nigeria.

Martiros Saryan House-Museum

The Martiros Saryan House-Museum houses a collection of the prolific artist’s paintings, his manuscripts, photos, and

personal belongings. Covering three floors, it takes you through the phases of his life and his love affair with his motherland, adding depth and meaning to his already famous works. Appropriately located on Saryan Street, the museum was built in 1965, during the artist’s lifetime, next to his home and studio.

Born in New Nakhichevan, Russia, in 1880, Saryan, whose talent for sketching and painting became apparent in his childhood, always dreamed of Armenia. He visited Armenia frequently and as he got to know the country and its soul, his style progressed and he found his niche. The museum takes you through the progression of his work, from classical, to post-impressionistic, to his own unique style, using modern techniques and bright, saturated colors to express something that was very uniquely his, and very uniquely Armenian.

Martiros Saryan once wrote, “I see every nation as a mighty tree. Its roots go deep into the native soil, while its branches covered with blossoms and fruit spread out over the entire world. The same is with art – everything that is genuine and truly national is also always universal.” And this perfectly sums up his art. His very personal specific and personal images of Armenia in bright burnt yellow resonate universally and have gained him acclaim throughout the world.

In 1915, Saryan went to Etchmiadzin to help refugees who had fled from the Armenian Genocide and although he was deeply troubled, his paintings from this period are an affirmation of life: still in bright colors, and bearing strong symbols. An oil and canvas displayed at the museum called “Large Oriental Still Life,” painted in 1915, depicts several fruits scattered in a state of disar-

Continued on page C11

Satellite Broadcast Program Grid

16 - 22 March



16 March		17 March		18 March		19 March		20 March		21 March		22 March	
MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST
4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30
5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00
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		3:35	6:35	3:35	6:35	3:35	6:35	3:35	6:35	3:35	6:35	3:35	6:35
		3:45	6:45	3:45	6:45	3:45	6:45	3:45	6:45	3:45	6:45	3:45	6:45

Museum-hopping in Yerevan

Continued from page C10

ray, but in the corner, there is a seed in bloom. "Art must resist death" was one of his mottos.

Saryan moved permanently to Armenia in 1921, with his wife, Lusik Agayan and their two sons. His studio (now a part of the museum) has high ceiling with huge windows for natural light, and had a beautiful view of Mount Ararat until a large apartment building covered it. His last painting, unsigned, is left on an easel there, and several of his later works, including a portrait of American author John Steinbeck, hang on the walls.

Sergei Parajanov House-Museum

The last stop on my museum-hop, the Sergei Parajanov House-Museum, sits in a beautiful old house overlooking the Hrazdan gorge. It's definitely among the most unconventional of Yerevan's museums.

Tbilisi-born Armenian filmmaker Sergei Parajanov (*Shadows of Forgot-*



Sergei Parajanov.

ten Ancestors, The Color of Pomegranates) was one of the most controversial filmmakers in the Soviet Union, and by far the most highly acclaimed Armenian filmmaker to date. He is widely regarded as one of the 20th century's greatest masters of cinema.

He was imprisoned twice for the ideas of freedom and independence that resonated through his films, and was forbidden to make films for several years at a time.

Although he was very patriotic and spent as much time in Armenia as he could, Soviet authorities never allowed him to live there. Finally, under perestroika, he was allowed to move to Yerevan, and the building that houses his museum was being built originally as a home for him. Unfortunately, he died in 1990, before it was completed. The museum opened a year later.

Although Parajanov was a trained cinematographer and is most famous for his films, the museum consists mostly of his collages, mosaics, and other artwork. Since he was not allowed to make films for so many years, he found collages to be the best means of expression available to him. He called them "compressed films".

If you've seen Parajanov's films, you'll know that his creativity had no limits. And his artwork in the museum is yet another manifestation of his boundless imagination. Parajanov always wanted

to travel and see the world, but even when he was invited to different film festivals to accept awards, he was never allowed to go. So he created works of art to represent all the places he longed to see. Among them are a large elephant's head made of an old suitcase to represent India, and collages to represent Great Britain and Italy.

There are several repeated symbols in Parajanov's work, including the pomegranate (life), egg (universe), and scale (injustice). His created art from anything he could scrape together, including broken pieces of china, mirrors and old gloves. Suffice it to say, Sergei Parajanov was a rare talent, a true eccentric and a genius, who, despite oppressive restrictions on his freedom and creativity, managed to leave behind a tremendous legacy.

Over the years, the Sergei Parajanov House-Museum has organized several exhibitions throughout the world, including those at Cannes, Thessaloniki, Tokyo, Moscow, Rome, Tehran, and Beijing. The museum's director, Zaven Sarkissian, is an acclaimed photographer and was a close friend of Parajanov's.

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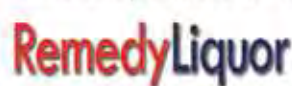
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