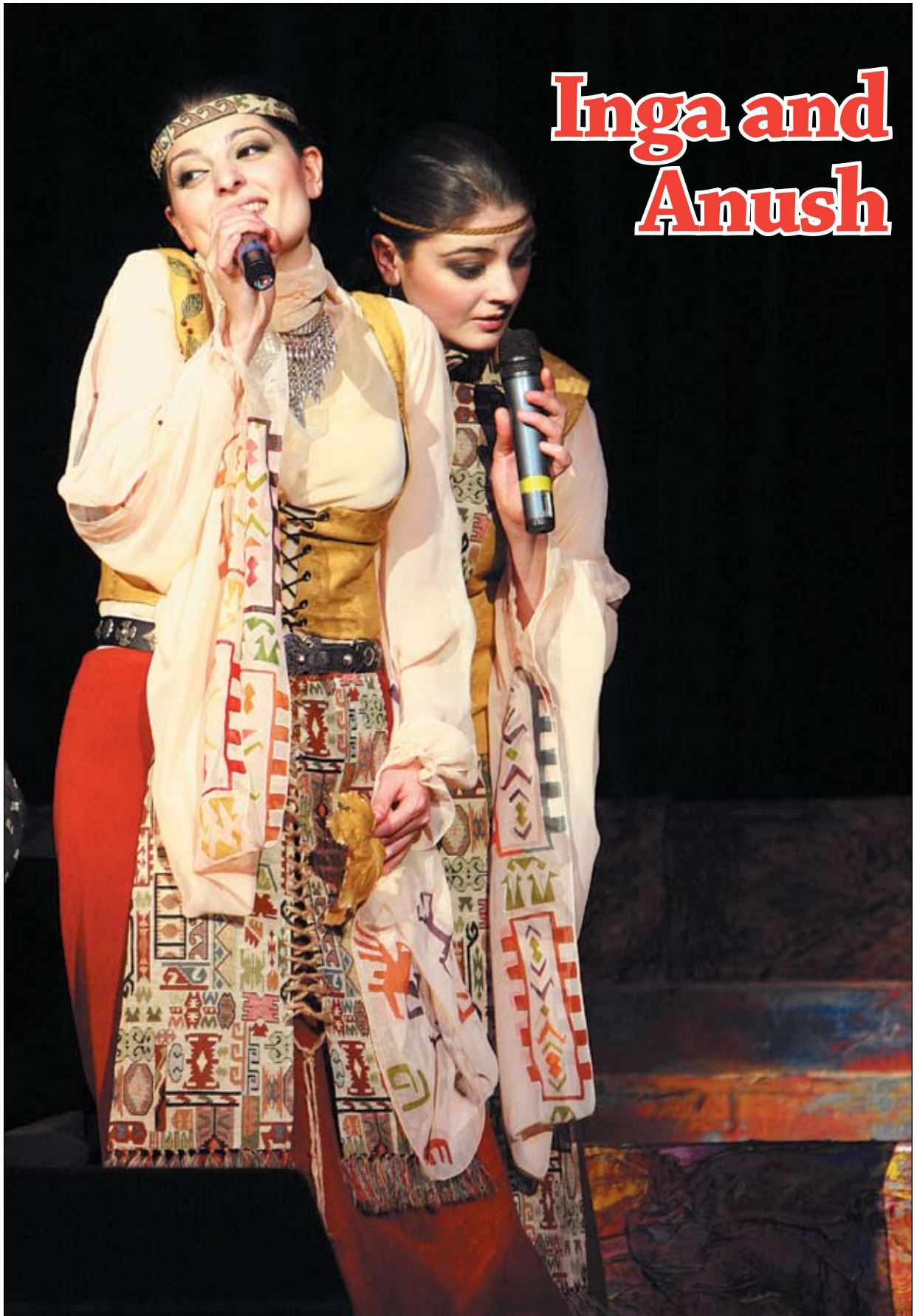


December 15, 2007



Inga and Anush

Lazarev: the fate of the artist in Russia Omar Khayyam: a giant among giants



Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan.

Levon Lazarev: the fate of the artist in Russia

by Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan

SAINT PETERSBURG, Russia – Saint Petersburg is a city of architecture and sculptures. It is one of the most beautiful and northernmost cities in the world. It is a combination of Amsterdam, Venice, Prague, and Vienna, taken together and mixed into one city.

Saint Petersburg is especially beautiful in the summer, during the white nights, when the city never goes to sleep. In the winter it is frighteningly dark, cold, and humid because it was built on a swamp by Peter the Great.

During one of those summer white nights, I stopped a taxi on the Neva riverbank and said to the driver, “I want to cruise the city, but I have a special plan. There was a great artist who recently died, and I want to visit each one of his sculptures.”

“I know who you mean,” said the driver. (It turned out that he was a Baku refugee). “There is only one great sculptor in this city and who died recently, Levon Lazarev. I’ll take you to his work.”

The family tree

Levon Lazarev’s family occupied a privileged position in the Russian Empire.

The very first of them Hovhannes Ter-Eghiazaryants, an 18th-century merchant, presented the Russian Count Orlov,



Levon Lazarev standing beside his last sculpture.

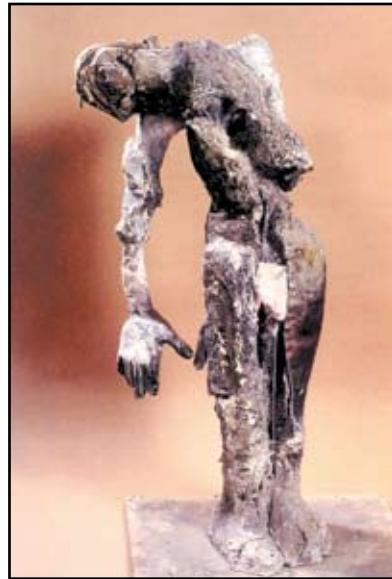
Empress Catherine the Great’s favorite, with one of the biggest diamonds in the world. Orlov gave the diamond to the empress, who

in turn gave Ter-Eghiazaryants the status of a nobleman. This is written in Armenian on the tomb of Ter-Eghiazaryants in the Alex-

art

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On page C1: Dynamic duo sisters Anush and Inga Arshakyan’s idea of performing Armenian folk music is about recreating the colorful past of the Armenian highlands. To watch them perform on stage is to witness the sensuality and unassuming wisdom of Armenian folk infused seamlessly into our modern sensibilities. See page C14.



Top left:
Composition
Human Wounds.
Bottom left:
Komitas.
Far left: A
monument at the
place of a female
concentration
camp (a fragment).

andro-Nevskaya Lavra, the most privileged historical cemetery in Saint Petersburg, where many czars lie. Since then the “Orlov” or “Lazarev” diamond has been a hero of many adventure stories in Russian literature.

One of Ter-Eghiazaryants’ successors in the 19th century, Hovhannes Lazarev, a successful businessperson and benefactor, created the first-ever eastern-languages institute in the Russian Empire, the Lazarev Institute (Lazaryan Jemaran).

The Lazarev Institute in the 20th century became part of Moscow State University and was renamed as the Institute of the Countries of Asia and Africa. Many diplomats, orientalist, and spies of the

Soviet Union received their education at the institute.

The splendid mansion of the Lazaryan Jemaran today is alive and well in Moscow. In the Soviet era it was the representation of Soviet Armenia, and it currently houses the Armenian Embassy. In terms of its building and territory, it is probably one of the biggest Armenian embassies in the world.

The sculptor Levon Lazarev’s great-grandfather, Simeon, was a general in the czar’s army. His grandfather, Mikhail, was a high-level civil servant. Mikhail had four sons.

The oldest, Simeon, was one of the first health ministers of Soviet Armenia. He was arrested in 1937

and spent 19 years in prisons and camps. After returning he kept his communist ideals intact, and all his life hated Josef Stalin.

The other son, Levon, was one of the first chief prosecutors of Soviet Armenia. He died of natural causes in the 1930s.

The only non-Bolshevik brother, Gabriel, joined the White Guard during the 1918–20 Civil War between the Bolsheviks and their opponents. He was arrested and shot in 1937.

Finally, Levon’s father, Constantin, was also an active Bolshevik and occupied high positions in the Caucasus in the 1920s. He was arrested and shot with other old Bolsheviks in 1937 after one of the show trials staged by Stalin and his clique.



Top right:
Pushkin. Bottom
right: *Portrait
of Composer A.
Khachaturyan*. Far
right: *Academician
Sakharov*.

The life and work

Levon was born in Tbilisi in 1928. After his father was shot as an “enemy of the people,” he endured hardships and had to work despite his young age, while also continuing to study in secondary and musical schools. He wanted to be an actor, but after a great Armenian painter residing in Tbilisi, Alexander Bashbeyuk-Melikyan saw his drawings, the master convinced Levon to become an artist.

But since the competition to the artists’ department of the Tbilisi Art Academy was too difficult to

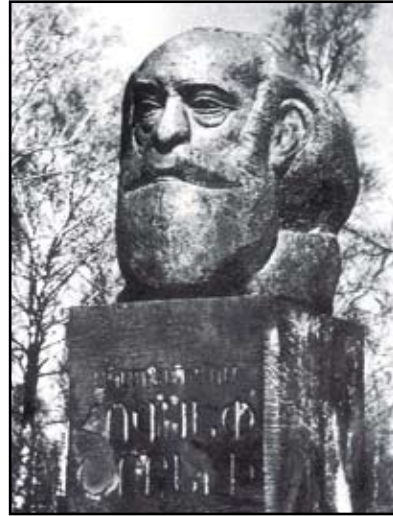
enter, Levon entered the sculpture department. In a year’s time he was excluded from the academy “for cosmopolitanism.” That was the accusation typically directed at Jews or other minorities in the Soviet Union in the late 1940s.

As a result, Levon went first to Moscow and later finished his studies in Leningrad (the name of Saint Petersburg during the Soviet era).

Levon had good teachers and was extremely talented. His talent was recognized early in his life. Step by step he was able to

make room for his art in the Soviet Union. However, fame always eluded him. Despite his incessant work, he was not able to become a member of the Union of Artists, the official Soviet structure, which was occupied and governed by bureaucrats from the art world.

During his youth, the reason for the oppression he suffered was the fate of his family – his father being a victim of the Stalin era. When he became older, he was still kept at arm’s length from access to opportunities given to officially recognized Soviet artists:



Left: Tombstone of the director of the State Hermitage, academician I.A. Orbeli. Far left: Levon Lazarev.

participation in exhibitions, and lucrative contracts from the state for city and street sculptures. The reason was his uncompromising talent, which was foreign and ultimately scary to the official Soviet art establishment.

But with his optimistic character and great capacity to work, Levon was still able to transcend the glass ceiling, and have a number of his medium and small sculptures installed, mainly in Saint Petersburg, and also in other Russian cities. While rejected from the club of fellow-artists, the Union of Artists, he was invited to become a member of a similar entity, the Union of Architects. In the last years of his life after the collapse of the Soviet Union he was invited to become a member of the Russian Academy of Art.

Lazarev's art virtually unknown in Armenia

Still, when judged against his talent Levon Lazarev's recognition in his life time remained negligible. And even today he remains little known not only to Russia, the country in which he lived all his life, but also to Armenia, the country that he loved, visited a few times, and in which he always dreamed of exhibiting and installing his sculptures.

This never happened and today there is not a single work of Levon

Lazarev in Armenia, a country that strives to be a museum; a country where sculptures are situated in increasing numbers in the streets of cities and in museums; a country that has a long and cherished tradition of monumental art.

Talent is partly an issue of taste. Some Armenian sculptors of the second half of the 20th century have had remarkably bad luck.

The most talented ones, such as Arto Chakmakchyan, and especially Yervand Gojabashyan, left Armenia in the 1970s for a better life in the Western Hemisphere, and were lost from the public discourse of Armenian art.

Another talented monumentalist, Suren Nazaryan, the author of revolutionary commander Hayk Bzhshikyan's monument in the Nork district of Yerevan, also left in the 1990s for Los Angeles and eventually died there.

Levon Lazarev was not among those painters, sculptors, and jewellers who first came to Soviet Armenia answering the Soviet call for repatriation. Nor like others was he born there, to leave in the 1970-90s, disappointed, because of hardship and for economic reasons. But among these talents he had a capacity which, perhaps, none of them did; he was equally professionally capable and talented in several genres: in monumental as well as in small figures, in indoor sculpture as well as in



Portrait of People's Artist of USSR, stage-director G.A. Tovstonogov.

outdoor, in sculpting as well as in painting.

Levon did not leave Saint Petersburg. His work never entered Armenia. Armenia just skipped him, didn't notice – almost nobody there learned about him. And now, after his death, his legacy is leaving Saint Petersburg as well.

An untimely death and exodus to Berlin

Levon died of a heart attack, which occurred during a car accident. According to his widow, he could have lived if only the doctors in the hospital where he was taken would have taken care of him. But they did not. This is not unusual in Russia. Elderly people, when they are taken to an ordinary hospital, are often left on their own to die if

Monument to firefighters who perished during the Second World War.



a special financial arrangement is not made for them. Levon was not famous enough and his wife was not rich enough to make a special arrangement for him. He was an ordinary elderly patient who, if he stayed in the hospital, was going to owe the doctors big money. So, according to his widow, they just left him to die.

He was 76 then. I saw him a year before that. He was extremely active, working, making big sculptures. A sculptor's work is physical. One has to climb up ladders, move heavy objects. Levon for his age was as agile as a youngster, despite having suffered another heart attack a few years earlier. He was a very healthy and active person when he had the car accident.

Every life ends at some point. Levon's was not a timely death. One may say that he had already built hundreds of sculptures, despite being at the outskirts of Russian sculptors' officialdom, and he had acquired the level of fame he was destined to.

After the collapse of the USSR, his work was exhibited in many European countries. He travelled a lot to the openings of his work in different locations such as France, Germany, and Britain. He did not become rich, but he had opportunities.

A few months before his death, Levon finished the work that became his last, called "The Exodus." This was the swan song of his talent. It has a biblical connotation, but as he explained it to me, it was

people like me, who would leave Armenia with their families and newborn children because they could not survive there.

Levon's topics were simultaneously timely and symbolic. He finished the work but did not have time to cast it into any long-lasting material. It was built from things like paper and plastic, a puppet's head and an Italian carnival mask, and afterward it was going to be cast in metal. Now Levon is dead and there is no money, not even a plan, to finish it.

He left his wife, the third official wife he had married over his lifetime, and the mother of two of his four children, 6 and 9 years old then, with no means to survive.

No state or business structure or person in Saint Petersburg was interested or capable of helping the family. To the contrary, the authorities wanted his studio back, which had not been privatized during his lifetime, and there was nowhere to put his sculptures.

His widow then made an arrangement with her and her husband's German connections, registered a company there, and as I write these words, she is leaving Saint Petersburg for Berlin to open an Exhibition Center of Modern European Sculpture and Art named after Levon Lazarev. About 20 to 30 of his sculptures, and many of his paintings, his entire legacy which belongs to his family, will be exhibited there.

Why Germany, and why Europe? The explanation is quite simple: there were many consulates of European countries in Saint Petersburg. Diplomats who work there like sightseeing and arts. Levon's home and the studio were a place to visit in Saint Petersburg, a must-see. Foreign guests, journalists, and the entire beaux monde would come and go. Many of the consuls became his friends and fans of his art over time. He sculpted many of them. It's thanks to them that he had opportunities to exhibit his art

in Europe. And it is the support of some of them that helped his widow save his legacy in a consolidated way, leaving behind Russia for Germany.

Lazarev's unique style

When readers see Levon's face, his burning eyes, it will be obvious to them that he was an attractive person. But it is difficult to impress how attractive he was indeed in life – especially when he interacted with people. He was one of the kindest and wisest individuals, who had a special aura and charisma. When you were in his presence you felt optimism and uplifted. It is not only his art that conquered people's hearts; it was also his personality.

But he was all about art, and particularly about his own art. I was 17 when I visited his studio for the first time. It was 1981. He was at the height of his talent, and the times we were living in were known as the apex of stagnation in the USSR. Freedom in art was prohibited but the boundary was cracking from the attacks of human creativity, which the aging Soviet leaders were unable to effectively oppose.

Levon acquired orders to build sculptures of Pushkin and Tolstoy – Russia's greatest literary figures. When I heard about that, a cynical youngster, I thought: "Well, probably these will be another couple of parade portraits. How can one portray Pushkin and Tolstoy in a fresh way, if there had been zillions of their images over the last century? It is like portraying Napoleon; he will have to have the triangle hat, no way around that."

Then I saw his Pushkin. It was a head of a half-Arab half-Russian person with curly hair, with a tragic and unhappy and extremely expressive face. The head was not round and accomplished; there was a huge crack in it from behind. I was struck with awe; it was not the likeness of the por-

trait to Pushkin that conquered me, and not the modern ways of abstraction and symbolism, which abound in this work. It was the combination of both that was striking.

It was as if all the artists of the world since the times of Rodin and Moore were trying to find a way to combine and amalgamate the freedom of modern approaches that would transcend realism with the traditional function of art to be understandable, transferable, and easily accessible; to be about life as we know it – and here was one man who had found that way. It was so simultaneously masterful and easy, it was a miracle. But no one, it seemed, understood what was happening right then and there.

Then I looked at Tolstoy – the God of all prose writers, particularly for the Russian-language world. Tolstoy, the one who wrote those thick novels that were life stories about war and peace, about historical eras, about love and family, about politics and masses and power. They were also philosophical treatises on ethics and politics, and they were also art monuments of an unprecedented scale by their intellectual ambition far surpassing other oeuvres of the 19th century, rich with thick novels, such as those of Balzac or Hugo or Dickens.

Even today many women dislike him for the directness with which he explained the uncovered simplicity of an egotistic male attitude to females. Every writer envies him for describing the processes of human death or a horse's psychology with unprecedented mastery, bordering on cynicism, and calmness, aloofness from human passion equal only to God's.

Tolstoy eventually built his own religion and was ousted from the Russian Orthodox Church. His message to the world, as delivered to me by the late Hrant Matevosyan in my youth, was that



every person had to be a master of the world and manage it as his plantation. **Levon Lazarev and his sculpture.**

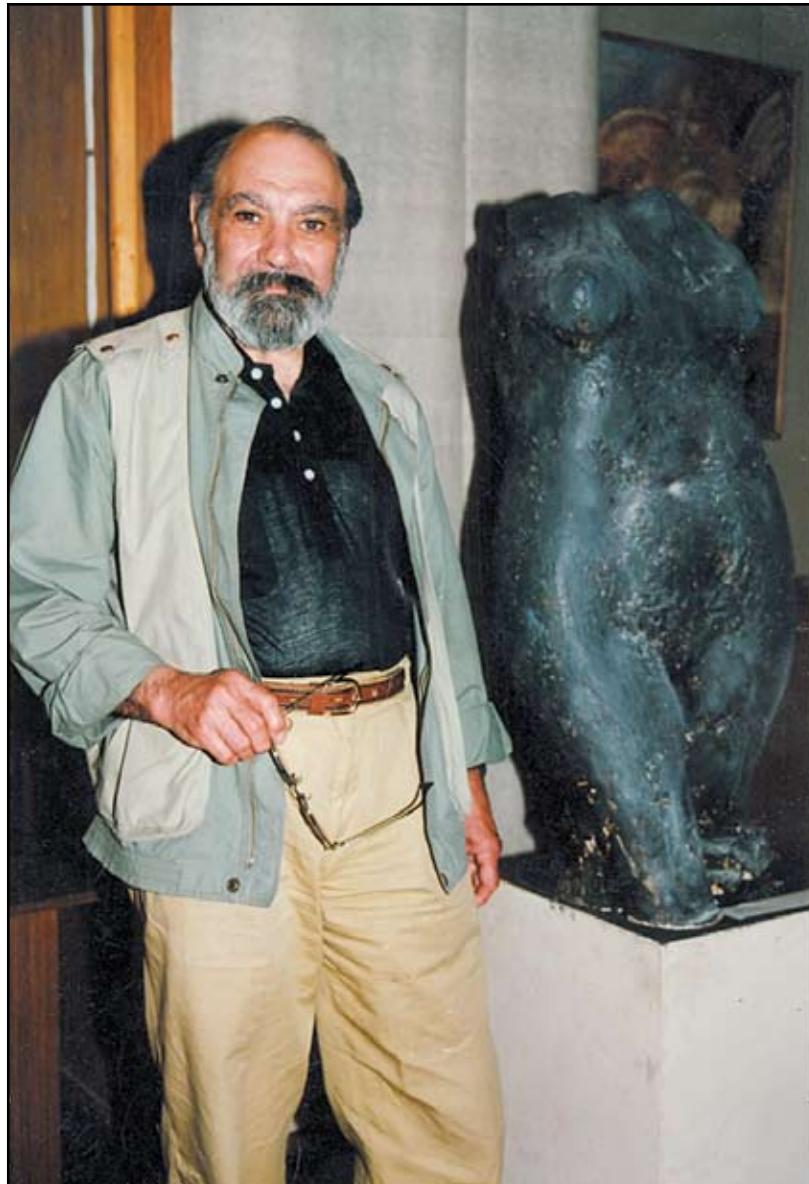
Levon's Tolstoy was long, white, and thin, extremely old but powerful. It was the Tolstoy of his last days, a rebel Tolstoy, a plantation owner and manager who, upset with the incapacity of his world to run according to a preplanned commonsensical order, and particularly upset with his incapacity to govern that kind of world, ran away from his plantation and family. Tolstoy died in an unknown little train station somewhere deep in the heartland of Russia.

Levon was cutting through the interpretations that would put classical writers and possible attitudes about them in stone, and getting these great humans back to us alive and full of emotions.

An Armenian artist

Levon was Armenian, and Armenian themes were numerous in his

It is difficult to impress how attractive Levon was in life – especially when he interacted with people. He was one of the kindest and wisest individuals, who had a special aura and charisma.



work. Back when it was prohibited to refer to the Genocide in the Soviet Union, he built his Gomidas and his figure “Suffering,” devoted to the Genocide. After seeing his Aram Khachaturian and Hovsep Orbeli, when I think about these historical figures, I see them in the shape of Levon’s sculptures in my inner vision.

He built a monument to those who were killed in the Gulag and called it “A monument to those unfairly persecuted in Chile,” using a common trick that would help the work pass Soviet censorship. This tragic and beautiful work, after the collapse of the USSR, was acquired by a Siberian city where

there had been camps during Stalin’s times. The sculpture left Saint Petersburg but never arrived at its destination. It is lost.

Perhaps Levon’s biggest monument is one of his last works, the sculpture of Andrei Sakharov, one of the creators of the Russian nuclear bomb, who went on to become a human rights activist and dissident. Sakharov was persecuted, then freed by Gorbachev, and received the Nobel Peace Prize. He championed the rights of Armenians all the way to Artsakh, where he intervened with a peace-making mission. Halfway through that mission, he died.

Meshadi Azizbekov was one of the 26 Baku commissars, the group of Civil War-era Bolsheviks led by Stepan Shahumian. An ethnic Azerbaijani, Azizbekov had a square named after him in Soviet Yerevan. In 1990 his sculpture was torn down by the populace, who demanded from Armenia’s last Communist government that it rename the square after Sakharov. This was one of the first victories of the popular will. The square continues to bear Sakharov’s name.

It was for this square that Levon decided to create his monument. I don’t know whether there were any negotiations with the Armenian government, but his Sakharov never arrived in Yerevan. Instead, it was placed in Saint Petersburg in a square behind the Saint Petersburg State University.

As is typical for the work of Levon, the fate of the monument is not uneventful – there are some powers in the city government who want it removed. Others support it. With the change in government or other events, its place may no longer be secure.

Levon’s works are not easy to grasp at first glance. Although his figures may fall into the category of realism or symbolism, what unites them is that they are not meant to be eye candy.

A human eye should “read” them, “walk” over their curves and niches as when one reads the text in a novel. This became obvious for me once more when I was trying to photograph another of his famous works – the monument to the World War II-era firefighters of German-besieged Leningrad.

I clicked from every possible perspective. From each angle it was a different story about the fire fighters, their youth and determination, their experience and heroism, their professionalism and tragedy, their loneliness and concerted effort. 𐌆



Shahan Sanossian

Megapolis Osmosis: Connected by life in L.A.

An upcoming group show at Harvest Gallery features three diverse artists

by Shahan Sanossian

LOS ANGELES – Harvest Gallery’s next group exhibition, Megapolis Osmosis, features the work of three diverse artists united by their geography. An opening reception will be held at the gallery in Glendale on Thursday, December 20, from 6 to 9 P.M., and the work will be on display until January 13.

Gayane Galstyan, manager and curator of the gallery, came up with the title during a meeting with the artists. “[The artists] said that this huge, diverse city is where they all live,” Galstyan says. “This cosmopolitan city is a great place to consume and be consumed. The word ‘osmosis’ is replacing the word consumption. It means gradual, often unconscious assimilation or absorption.”

Bolles’ found objects

Susan Bolles, one of the artists featured in the group show, is fascinated by everyday objects. Her series is titled Plain and Simple. “I paint objects that will one day be forgotten,” Bolles says. “They’re very common items – a paper bag, a bottle of soap – so we tend to over look them. They are unimportant. They are overly plain, simple, everyday necessities of life, and we have no interest in preserving them or commemorating them.”



Susan Bolles.
From the Cleaning Supply Series, monotype, oil on paper, 28x20 inches.

Bolles was born in Massachusetts. She has little formal training in visual art, though she holds an MFA in theater design from New York University Tisch School of the Arts. She has worked as an art director in film and television for over twenty years.

Bolles moved from New York City to Los Angeles in 1998 and currently lives in downtown. “I think of my work as very American. The objects can be found in many American homes. However, it was moving to Los Angeles which allowed me space with good light to paint. A loft in New York was financially well out of my reach.

“In the short time I’ve been painting cleaning supplies, most of the

major manufacturers of household cleaners have changed their packaging, and I would guess very few people even noticed. So in an odd way, I’m not just a painter. I’m a historian capturing details of American life today before it disappears tomorrow.”

Brisson’s art of the everyday

Gregory Brisson’s work could also be described as the art of the everyday. “My motivation comes from contact with other people and objects,” Brisson says. “I have always had an interest in studying people on the subway, in restaurants, children at play. Life in gen-

exhibit



Susan Bolles.
Brown Paper Bag,
2005, charcoal, oil
on plywood, 48x32
inches .

eral. Sometimes a good book. I am motivated by life and my love and hate of humanity.”

Brisson was born in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and studied at St. Cloud State University. He attended the San Francisco Art Institute. After earning a degree in art education, Brisson taught in Wisconsin and later at Cal State University. “I was a part of the conservatory ... teaching gifted students from elementary to high school. I am currently retired and working independently.”

Brisson describes his works in this exhibition as “whimsical, colorful, happy, and serious statements on canvas. There is not one current theme running through



Gregory Brisson. Parisian Cafe.

the works of art. I find the works are tied together through the expressive use of color, composition and my own style.” He is strongly influenced by German Expressionism. The whimsical elements in his work create a playful contrast between his formal training and the naiveté of Outsider Art.

Gauche’s improvisations

Born in Yerevan and raised in Hollywood, Hrair Simitian, known as Gauche, has been influenced by both cultures. “LA is a great city, so ‘imperfectly perfect,’ like life itself.” It is fitting that his work is included in this group exhibition. “All the participating artists are the byproduct of the same space, time, and city. We travel and come to the same place from different directions and tell the same story from different angles.”

Gauche has studied art in Los Angeles but considers his life experiences just as formative as his formal study. “My teachers were ordinary people with their strengths and weaknesses, in addition to special masters and mentors that I had the honor of knowing and learning from.” He has worked as an art director for a major sports apparel company, a stage designer, and an illustrator

and designer for publications.

When painting, Gauche does not begin with any preconceived ideas. “I create without ‘script’ by improvising and tapping deep into my subconscious in a state of complete emotional divorce from myself.” He finds it difficult to describe his work and does not want to impose his point of view on the viewer. His paintings are detailed, complex compositions that seem to be influenced both by Abstract Impressionism and graffiti.

Gauche’s Armenian identity, like his life in Los Angeles, informs his work. “Being an Armenian is like receiving a condensed, enriched crash course in humanity. Having an Armenian identity is both burdening and empowering at the same time. Nevertheless, it is a distinct privilege, like it is a privilege to be part of any other cultural inheritance, tradition, or national group. The art I create and the message I try to share through it are in harmony with and are directly connected to my Armenian identity and reflect its fundamental essence to overcome darkness with light, to defeat evil with love.”



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Omar Khayyam, a giant among giants, reinterpreted

by Andrew Kevorkian

As you raise your glass to toast the New Year, perhaps you will pause a moment to think about how the world *knows* with such accuracy when one year ends and the other begins. And if you do, you should utter a toast to Omar the Astronomer, who 928 years ago calculated the length of the year to within four seconds of the actual length as determined by today's atomic clocks.

And, if you have anything left in the glass, you may want to utter a toast to Omar the Mathematician, who discovered the "zero" (invented by the Indian mathematicians) in a Samarkand library and enabled it to be transmitted to the scholars in the West.

A polymath and a free-thinker, and known by many titles in his time, Omar Khayyam was culturally a Persian, intellectually a Greek, personally a rebel, religiously a skeptic.

And, in the eyes of the Muslims, a heretic. So much so that in the last 40 years of his life he lived under a *fatwa* and kept constantly looking over his shoulder; eventually he gave up his teaching and his scientific endeavors and returned to his home village in hopes of ending his life peacefully. He even went on a Hajj (with a large group so as to be safe in a crowd) in hopes of convincing the narrow-minded Islamic leaders that he was a true believer.

Journalist Andrew Kevorkian, a frequent contributor to the *Reporter*, lives in Philadelphia, Pa.



Hazhir Teimourian.

He wasn't.

One can only think of what was lost to the world when he gave up his science – just as one can only wonder what was lost to the world when Galileo, also under threat of his life, also gave up his science.

Thus was born Omar the Poet. Although he dabbled in the occasional *ruba* (*rubaiyat* is the plural) while still a young man, it wasn't until late in his life that he composed the quatrains that have delighted the world.

All this and more – much, much more – one learns in reading the utterly fascinating biography, *Omar Khayyam: Poet, Rebel, Astronomer*, by Hazhir Teimourian, who tells us, by the by, that most of the quatrains are subtly mocking or otherwise challenging Islamic teachings. This reader, at least, will now re-read the *Rubaiyat* with a new pair of eyes to seek out the hidden messages in the quatrains.

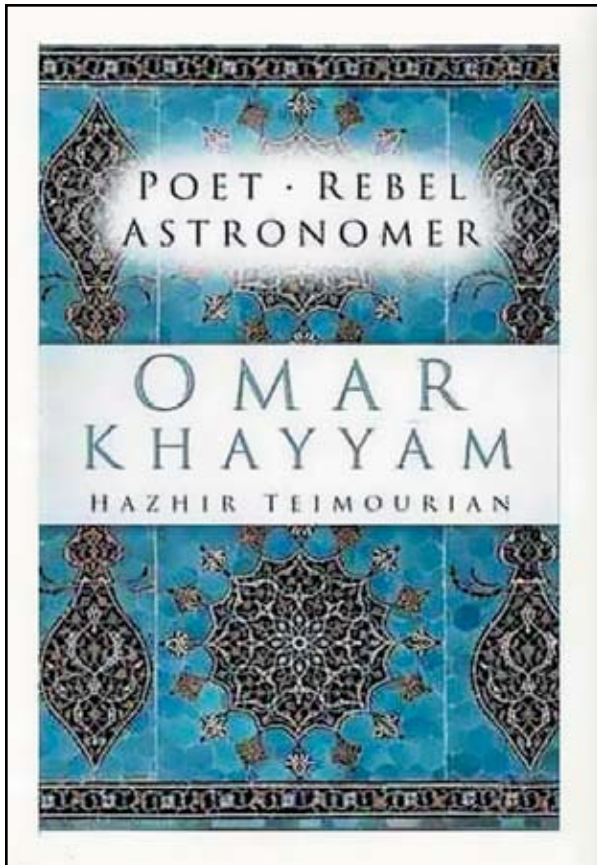
Also, Teimourian tells us, most

of what is attributed to Omar may not be his, or may have been severely butchered or otherwise made obscure by poor copyists after his death.

Not much is really known about Omar, but that doesn't prevent Teimourian from making some conclusions based on available information. He does this by offering a broad-brushed, sweeping history of the times, building a mosaic picture rather than telling a linear tale, that includes the visit of Halley's comet in 1066 (with which the book begins); the sighting of the super nova of 1054 that was visible in daylight for 24 days (and which gave the heavens the beautiful Crab Nebula); the story of the First Crusade (and how many of the "virtuous" knights lost the point en route); the make-up of the caravans that traversed the deserts of the Middle East (comprised of up to 3,000 animals – in numbers, there is strength); the story of the schism that split the Church of Rome from the rest of Christendom (there was one demand too far); the layout and contents of libraries (the Greek variety versus the Roman) and the mistreatment of infidels by Islam (read today's newspapers – nothing has changed).

With regard to the last item, it is interesting to note that not only were Jews mistreated, but they also had to wear yellow to mark them out. And the world thought that Adolf Hitler thought up the yellow Star of David!

As a result of this mosaic, the text is full of qualifiers (albeit more than likely correct) such as "could have," "might have," "must



Hazhir Teimourian, *Omar Khayyam: Poet, Rebel, Astronomer*; 365 pp. Sutton: London. ISBN 978-0-7509-4715-2.

assume,” “probably,” and “would probably.” But, these are not distracting.

The Islam that tormented Omar was that of the Saljuq Turks (all spellings in this article are Teimourian’s), who tried in every way possible to destroy the superior Persian culture, and also impose Arabic on the Persians. With varying degrees of success, often depending on the shahs whom he served, Omar won some battles and lost some battles, but always retained his integrity.

It was under one of the benevolent shahs – who Teimourian suggests was a secret skeptic – that Omar was appointed to establish a “modern” observatory and to determine the length of the year. With a team of like-minded thinkers, and using the most rudimentary of equipment, they determined that the year was 365.242199 days long or, putting it in another way, the year was 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 46 seconds. Today’s atomic clocks make the last fig-

ure 50 seconds! Omar reached his conclusion by the simple (?) expedient of abandoning – or ignoring – the Islamic lunar calendar and resurrecting the pre-Islamic solar calendar, and calculating from there. This did not endear him to the Muslims. (Incidentally, since 1079, when the new calendar came into force, the Islamic lunar year has fallen about 49 years behind.)

Falling behind in the length of the year was not all that resulted from the Saljuq invasion. Libraries were destroyed, thinkers were oppressed, and dissent was punished. Among those who oppressed Omar was one who believed that all books should be destroyed because there was only one book that held the truth – the Koran – and all thoughts not in the Koran were apostasy and anathema.

Teimourian’s book abounds with stories of the equal-opportunity hatreds of Muslim against

tears, but also of dynamism and creativity, pride and joy, hopefully culminating, after nearly 3,000 years, in a full sighting of the sun, a feeling that eternity appears assured at last.”

After a brief history of Armenia – from its early days, its conflicts with a treacherous (at times) Byzantium, the westward migration of the Turks and the disaster that brought, and touching on the 20th century – he brings us back to the 11th century, ending with the invasion of Armenia by Arp-Arslan (the first great leader of the Saljuqs) in 1064, who takes as his bride the young daughter of Bagrat IV, given up by the king “in the hope of buying a measure of safety for the rest of his people.” Teimourian alerts us that “We shall hear more later of the wretched young princess.” And we do, including her life in a harem as “the Armenian lady.”

Arp-Arslan had more success with Armenia than his uncle Sultan Toghril, who twice drove into Armenia, in 1048 and 1053, even sacking Kars, and was twice beaten back decisively, ironically in defense of Byzantium!

We also meet General Badr al-Jamali, who eventually becomes the ruler of Egypt. Originally, he had been kidnapped in a raid on an Armenian town in Anatolia; sold as a slave to the Emir Jamal ed-Din bin Ammar, he was given the Muslim name Badr (becoming known as Badr the Jamali – belonging to Emir Jamal). He turns out to be a remarkable soldier and rises to the rank of general.

Armenia and the Armenians are woven into the narrative in many places, but the book is about Omar, to whom we must return.

Before we do however, mention must be made of the problems that the Muslims have with two outstanding women who then – as now – are nobodies in the Muslim world. At one time, the rivalry between them – Terken and Zubeida – makes the intrigues and plot-

FitzGerald created a long poem while Teimourian has translated Omar literally.

Muslim, but one example will suffice. The powerful Grand Vizier of Persia, Nizam al-Mulk, sent his son to Baghdad, and Teimourian reports that the son, Mo’ayyad, “nearly lost his life several times in clashes between the Shia and Sunni districts of the city!”

Except for noting that nothing has changed in a thousand years, let us turn to a subject closer to hand.

Teimourian gives Armenia and some individuals center-stage throughout his narrative. Here’s how he introduces the reader to Armenia:

“The story of the Armeniannation is one of the most heartbreaking and yet also heart-warming tales in all history. It is a chronicle of

tings of the Roman world depicted in *I, Claudius* seem like child's play. Each is fighting for her son to be leader and, at one time, rival Islamic worlds are (horror! horror!) in effect led by these women. In this regard, my favorite passage in the book is a description of a bride-to-be's procession to her marriage:

"Thus on 8 May, the bride's procession set out from the royal palace in Baghdad towards the caliph's palace, with the caliph's mother and aunt accompanying the bride in solemn progress. We read that 130 camels in Byzantine brocades and seventy-four mules with gold harnesses were needed to carry the dowry, and that her jewelry and perfume alone required twelve silver chests. Thirty-three purebred horses of various origins were an extra gift."

What is missing in this document that Teimourian quotes? The name of the princess!

But, on to Omar the Poet. Omar lived to be 83 (his dates are 1048 to 1131) and, though he had dabbled at his poetry since his 20s, he devoted his last four decades to seriously producing his *Rubiayat* – though, of course, this is the name that the world has applied to them, since they were gathered after his death.

In the course of the biography, Teimourian provides his own renderings of 50 of Khayyam's works. "Why another translation when we have [Edward] FitzGerald's glorious version...?" he asks. He answers that having examined the 158 quatrains in their original form (contained in the "FitzGerald Manuscript" in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University), "I thought that only 57 had any chance of belonging to Khayyam."

Teimourian identifies and freshly translates the 50 quatrains he judges authentic, along with the full set of FitzGerald translations as generally published. One criticism I have is that Teimourian makes no attempt to relate his 50

to their FitzGerald counterparts for comparison purposes, though he does select one for which he provides both the FitzGerald version and the Persian original, as well as his own rendering. In listing his 50, Teimourian includes the original Persian beside it – for those who may want to second-guess him and try their own hand. These are followed by FitzGerald's 75. Teimourian explains that FitzGerald created a long poem, while he himself has translated Omar literally and tried to place the quatrains in a chronological sequence.

A word or two about the author. Hazhir (I take that liberty, since

he is a long-time friend) is an Iranian-born Kurd who has been living and working in London as a journalist, and is the British media's "authority of choice" when it needs instant, authoritative, and accurate comments and information on matters concerning the Middle East.

As to his book, it is highly unlikely that anyone will write a rival biography of Lord Omar that is as interesting and as delightful to read.

When Sir Isaac Newton said, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." Omar Khayyam's shoulders were among those on which he stood. ☞

The author, an Iranian-born Kurd, works in London as a widely respected journalist.

Selections from Khayyam's *Rubiayat*

As rendered by H. Teimourian and E. FitzGerald

1. Teimourian

Some bread, some cheese and a jug of wine,
With you beside me beneath a lush vine!
I know a great king who would, if he could,
Barter his crown for that which is mine.

2. Teimourian

And when you gather at the old tavern,
Each others' latest trivia to learn,
Choose the best of wines, drink to absent friends,
Leave a glass empty, when it is my turn.

3. Teimourian

Since Venus and Mars trod the sky at night,
Than the juice of grapes naught has proved so right.
I ask my vintner, ask him often: Why!
Better than he sells, what hopes he to buy?

FitzGerald

Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse – and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness –
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

FitzGerald

And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on The Grass,
And in Thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
Where I made one – turn down an empty Glass!

FitzGerald

And much as Wine has pla'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour – well,
I often wonder what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the Goods they sell.



Betty Panossian-Ter Sargssian.



The new face – or faces – of Armenian folk. Photo: Zaven Khachikian.

new music

Anush and Inga Arshakyan’s fresh take on Armenian folk music

by Betty Panossian-Ter Sargssian

Their dulcet voices and sheer technical excellence would be enough to wow audiences. But sisters Anush and Inga Arshakyan’s idea of performing Armenian folk music is about recreating nothing less than a folkloric state of mind: an unfettered ode to the colorful past of the Armenian Highlands, complete with period costumes and dramatic flourishes.

To watch the dynamic duo perform on the concert stage is to witness the sensuality and unassuming wisdom of Armenian folk meld seamlessly into our modern

sensibilities. Credit Anush and Inga’s youthful drive, the genuine pleasure they take in their material. It’s the kind of joy that harks back to childhood games and the attendant sense of wonderment – the same sense that informs much of Armenian folk music.

Destined for brilliance

As children living in Yerevan, singing duets of Armenian folk standards was how Anush and Inga entertained themselves while doing house chores. “Anush would wash the dishes and I would dry them and we would sing along,” Inga recalls. “Sometimes we would lose ourselves completely in a song and forget about our duties, until the voice of our mother would bring us back to reality.”

As far back as the Arshakyan sisters remember, they have dreamed of becoming classical musicians. Their parents fully supported

their aspirations. Inga loved the violin. Every time she saw a violinist play on television, she would try to imitate the performance. “I would take my mother’s knitting needles and play the role of a great musician,” she says. On her part, Anush, Inga’s senior by just over a year, yearned to become a singer.

Inga and Anush were seven and eight, respectively, when they were enrolled in music school. Inga took violin lessons. Anush was immersed in the violin.

At the music school, Anush attended piano classes while Inga was completely enchanted with her violin. They continued to sing, but their instrumental training took priority. “We were so focused on our music that during all those years it did not cross our minds that one day we would become singers,” Inga says. Within a few years, Anush was already composing songs.



Inga (far left top) and Anush (far left bottom) are a unique blend of the dramatic, traditional, and the sensual modern. Photos : Zaven Khachikyan.

The sisters are masters of living each moment on stage. (left and bottom)

From classical to folk

The sisters continued their musical education at the Babajanyan Music College and subsequently at the Komitas State Conservatory, where they received vocal training. By the time they graduated from the conservatory, they knew they would pursue a singing career.

Anush and Inga were discovered during a concert at Yerevan's Armenian State Song Theater. In keeping with the theater's tradition, host and director Arthur Grigoryan approached members of the audience for giving them a chance to ask a question or deliver a message. When Grigoryan walked up to Anush and Inga, the sisters asked him who his favorite Armenian composer was. "Komitas," Grigoryan said. At this, Anush and Inga spontaneously performed a duet of a Komitas classic. Both Grigoryan and the audience were captivated. In 2000, the sisters were hired as soloists for the prestigious Armenian



Re-igniting the folk tradition: Anush (right) and Inga on stage.



State Song Theater, which is renowned for its pop concerts.

Anush and Inga toured with the Armenian State Song Theater throughout Armenia and the diaspora. “The ensemble was a wonderful place to learn about life and music in equal measure,” Inga recalls. Working at the Armenian State Song Theater, the sisters found themselves at a crossroads. The classically trained musicians were presented with an opportunity to brake away and explore new genres. After experimenting with numerous directions, Anush and Inga decided to concentrate on their own modern interpretation of Armenian folk music. “We concluded that Armenian tradi-

tional folk, and particularly the legacy of Komitas, were dear to our hearts,” Anush says. “Folk music is also very flexible and can be presented in fusion with jazz, rock, and many other styles.”

A path all their own

Soon enough, Anush and Inga segued into an independent career as a folk duo. Their sound would be defined by both classical and contemporary elements, with guitars, drums, synthesizers, as well as contrabass and cello, accompanying traditional Armenian instruments such as the duduk, shvi, and dhol.

In 2003, the sisters had their first public performance as a duo – the celebrated “Seasons of life” con-

cert – in Yerevan. That same year they played at the Alex Theater in Glendale, California, and launched their debut album, “Menk Enk Ays Sarere” (We Are These Mountains). With their gorgeous vocals and gracefully evocative performances, Anush and Inga were an instant hint across the Armenian world, earning popular and critical acclaim for their sophisticated folk renditions (arranged by Anush) and dramatic presentations alike.

The duo also received a string of awards. “Yes Im Teghe Chem Gtnum” (I Can’t Fit In), a song composed by Anush, was recognized as Best Song of the Year by the 2003 Golden Harp Awards. “Tamzara,” a medley of folk songs featured on the eponymous album that followed the release of “Menk Enk Ays Sarere,” received the same award in 2004. Later that year, “Menk Enk Ays Sarere” received the Best Female Pop Retro Album award at the Armenian Music Awards.

Anush and Inga’s visual flair extended to their music videos as well. As they continued to give concerts in Moscow, Paris, Marseille, and elsewhere, they released several video clips, including 2006’s collaboration video with Russian pop icon Igor Sarukhanov.

New horizons

Currently Anush and Inga are busy working on their third album, to be released in spring 2008. The new collection will contain new compositions by Anush as well as her arrangements for a number of folk favorites. The sisters are also taking time off for solo projects. In November 2007, Anush released her first solo music clip, featuring a medley of songs by Komitas.

Whether performing solo or as a team, Anush and Inga have helped revive popular interest in Armenian folk music, making its timeless beauty once again accessible to a new generation of audiences. 𐌌

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www.ingaanush.am



Amy Raisin Darvish.

The Armenian Comedian unveiled: Sam Meneshian

But can you understand his humor?

by Amy Raisin Darvish

LOS ANGELES – With regular appearances on a popular local radio station, a handful of spots on national late night TV, and now starring in his own documentary film, Sam “The Armenian Comedian” has made it.

Just ask him. Or, simply wait: he’ll be happy to stop you on the street and tell you as much.

“You have to believe in yourself and push yourself up and one day you’re gonna make it, like me,” said Sam Meneshian, a hair cutter by trade who fashions himself a bonafide star in the world of comedy and in show business in general.

But unlike a Jerry Seinfeld, a Chris Rock, or any other mainstream comedy powerhouse, Meneshian seems blissfully unaware that silence and blank stares from an audience are the single worst enemy of any comic who has just delivered a punch line.

After nearly two decades of appearances on the highly rated Kevin and Bean morning radio show on KROQ in Los Angeles, the Armenian Comedian has indeed made a name for himself in the big city. Those radio spots led to appearances on TV’s *Jimmy Kimmel Live* and *The Man Show*.

Meneshian never writes down his jokes, nor does he prepare for his appearances on radio or TV. “It’s all up in here,” he said, pointing at his forehead.

This, it seems, is precisely why he



Sam Meneshian, the Armenian Comedian.

is booked on these shows – he is a man of unlimited self confidence and enthusiasm whose comedic ability is, well, quite limited.

Whether he is fearless or clueless is debatable, but two things about the 56-year-old Burbank resident are clear: His jokes often leave his audience blanketed in an uncomfortable silence, and numerous Armenians who have heard his act recoil at the thought that others may see him as a spokesperson for the Armenian people.

“It’s so annoying that he’s the one Armenian who gets all this airtime on mainstream radio and he’s so ridiculous and bad,” said Teni Khachaturian, 30, a publicist and West Hollywood resident. “I hear him and I think, ‘Oh my gosh, people are going to think that all Armenians are idiots like this.’”

But Meneshian, born and raised in Ethiopia – his grandfather, an Armenian soldier, fled Armenia in World War One to escape the

Genocide and eventually started a family in the African nation – waves off such criticism.

“I don’t care what they say, if they don’t understand,” he said. Yet, in the next sentence, Meneshian states that he wants to represent Armenians and become the lightning rod who establishes his people as regulars on mainstream TV and other media.

“The Armenian people love me so much because I am their hero,” Meneshian states, without a hint of self-consciousness, in the recently debuted documentary, *Born Hye: The Armenian Comedian Story*.

The documentary filmmakers describe Meneshian as a contradiction, at once insane, inspirational, and delusional.

“He’s gained a cult following, kind of like a William Hung character, but he’s still trying to become famous,” said Scott Pearlman, one of the director/producers of the documentary. “He really feels he deserves to be famous.”

“His M.O. is that he tells jokes and they’re incomprehensible. He covers that up by saying ‘My jokes are puzzles.’ With Sam the glass is always half full, at least on the surface,” Pearlman said.

Puzzles, indeed. Most of Meneshian’s jokes seem to go nowhere or can be described as juvenile, at best. A few examples: “Don’t you hate when you go to this fast food restaurant, they don’t even know what you ordering. They give you all mixed up packages going home and you have to go drive back and tell him, give me another french fry! What the hell is going on?”

Yet another: “Why the Armenian fireman takes his stepladder to

comedy

Sam and Julie Meneshian, Nov. 2007.



the bar? Because he heard drinks are on the house.”

And yet one more example of Meneshian’s unique comedic slant: “How many Armenians

does it take to screw a light bulb? Only one, we not that stupid.”

Whether the jokes are stories relating to something that actually happened to Meneshian, or

simply random thoughts that he has fashioned into jokes, it’s difficult to say. But he insists all of his jokes are stored in his head, never written down.

No one knows Meneshian and his tireless pursuit of stardom better than his wife, Julie, who has often been seated in those perplexed audiences when Meneshian has rattled off his jokes in his thick Armenian accent at weddings, birthday parties, and over the air waves. She admits to having sneaked out of such performances to escape embarrassment.

A Syrian-born woman of Armenian descent, Julie married her husband 27 years ago after meeting him in Hollywood, where she owns a hair salon.

“He’s just like a little boy, he’s just hyper,” she said. “He has too much energy. Armenian women my age, they say to me, ‘What

Born Hye: The Armenian Comedian Story

New film introduces Sam Meneshian to the world

by Amy Raisin Darvish

LOS ANGELES – It started seven years ago with a T-shirt, a chance meeting, and two young Jewish men who didn’t quite know what to make of the middle-aged Armenian man who descended on the pair at a costume shop in Hollywood.

Those turn of events culminated last month when the two young men debuted their documentary at a local movie theater, unleashing the film’s subject, Sam “The Armenian Comedian” Meneshian, on a packed house of nearly 150 people.

Then-film students Matt Van Gelder and Scott Pearlman had

little idea what they were getting themselves into in 2000 when they began shooting footage for what would become the documentary *Born Hye: The Armenian Comedian Story*. The novices of Armenian culture were about to receive an unforgettable education.

“As we were doing it we didn’t realize we’d be interviewing Armenian cultural groups or going to genocide marches,” said Van Gelder, 29, of North Hollywood. “Growing up Jewish, you grow up knowing (about the Armenian genocide). But that’s really all I knew about Armenians. Sam got me into the culture.”

The title of the film, *Born Hye*, was a no-brainer: Meneshian is not shy about his affection for smoking marijuana, nor his nearly fanatical devotion to his Armenian heritage. “I’m born hye, I feel hye, I’m hye forever,

I’ll die hye,” is his personal slogan, a double entendre that still makes him laugh.

The film is generating buzz in Los Angeles largely because of its promotion on the highly rated Kevin and Bean morning radio show on KROQ in Los Angeles. Beginning in 1991, Meneshian made his first of many appearances on the program, telling jokes that left most listeners scratching their heads in confusion.

Perhaps one in 10 of Meneshian’s jokes makes sense. But the 56-year-old Burbank hair stylist insists that his jokes are genius, over the heads of those who are baffled by his punch lines.

An example of his comedic repertoire: “Why Monica Lewinsky was on her knees in front of President Clinton? You know why? She was looking for her contact lenses.”

Always ready with a joke, or

are you doing with him?' A lot of Armenians, they don't like it, they don't like how Sam acts."

Meneshian's wife, who with Meneshian has two grown sons, may get exasperated with her husband's antics, but she admits that he makes her laugh. And she has played an important role in his comedic success.

In the late 1980s Julie watched a clown performing on Hollywood Boulevard, as amused passersby dropped money in the street performer's collection dish.

"I said, 'Sam, you can do this,'" she said. "He bought a book for \$6, learned to do animal balloons. He became the first Armenian clown. Starting in 1989, we made good money. We buy a house. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, we were booked. I used to go with him everywhere."

It is clear that Meneshian is starved for attention, no mat-

ter if that attention is positive or drenched in annoyance or even fear (Meneshian is not shy about describing the horrors of the Armenian Genocide, even to a group of unsuspecting grade-schoolers), according to Matt Van Gelder, co-director/co-producer of the film.

This insatiable thirst for attention has led Meneshian to perform as a ventriloquist, a clown, Santa Claus, a Power Ranger, and various other characters for parties and events. He also plays the recorder in a band and appears every Monday night in *The Ding Dong Show* at The Comedy Store in Los Angeles.

His quest for fame and fortune has driven his wife, his children, even the people who book him to appear on radio and TV, crazy.

Kevin, from the Kevin and Bean morning radio show on KROQ, captured this sentiment perfectly

in the documentary, when he explained the contradiction that is the Armenian Comedian.

"In short doses, in tiny little itsy-bitsy one-second doses, he's funny as hell," Kevin said in the film. "But a little bit more than that and he annoys everybody."

"It's true," Julie Meneshian said. "Five minutes with my husband is fine. But all day, it's too much. He drives you crazy. Too much."

If Meneshian takes these comments to heart, he doesn't show it. Between his part-time gigs cutting hair, Meneshian remains on his endless search for his next big break.

"Something inside me is pushing me. I'm stuck in this body," he said. "I already know that the fruits of my tree are ready to eat." ☞

connect:
www.bornhye.com

"He's just like a little boy, he's just hyper," Sam's wife Julie said.

something like it, Meneshian regularly confounds his audience with gems like this: "Why the headless chicken cross the street? To become KFC."

This particular brand of humor is apparent in clip after clip in the film. The combination of Meneshian's nonsensical jokes and his boastful, unyielding self confidence makes for an entertaining hour and 15 minutes.

"We really didn't know what to expect" at the film premier, said Pearlman, 30, of Calabasas, who directed and produced the film with Van Gelder. "We thought Sam was going to annoy the audience. We thought they were going to hate him. But they liked him. He can be such a charming guy. People really laughed."

Ever the self promoter, Meneshian noticed Van Gelder's KROQ T-shirt at that costume shop back in 2000 and the seeds

of an Armenian documentary were planted.

"He basically accosted us," Van Gelder said of that fateful day. "He ran up to us and started saying, 'I'm the Armenian Comedian from KROQ. You know who I am?' He found out we were making a film for our senior thesis. He kept bugging us to be in it."

Van Gelder and Pearlman initially said no, but Meneshian proved to be a determined man, and too outrageous to pass up.

"We both listened to KROQ so we were familiar with Sam," Pearlman said. "Because of KROQ he's attained a certain level of fame. There are tons of people with more talent who can't get a break, but Sam doesn't give up."

Pearlman and Van Gelder even tapped a local Armenian musician, Greg Hosharian, to score the film's music.

The filmmakers, who put

\$10,000 of their own money into the project, said the film needs some fine tuning and there are still some licensing issues to address. But Van Gelder and Pearlman are hoping to find a distributor for their film and are angling to get the piece screened at various film festivals.

Meneshian, who parlayed his radio gigs into spots on the Jimmy Kimmel show, said he has no doubt that it was his comedic talent that carried him from obscurity to the big time.

"You see what I did: first the radio, then TV, now the big screen," he said. "I did this by myself. Nobody did it for me. But do you know an agent or a Beverly Hills manager for me? I'm looking for my next film. Born Hye number two." ☞

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17 December

MONDAY		
EST	PST	
4:30	7:30	Good Morning, Armenians!
6:00	9:00	News in Armenian
6:20	9:20	The Colour of Sin- Serial
7:05	10:05	PS Club
7:35	10:35	Cool Program
7:55	10:55	The Making of a Film
8:30	11:30	The Armenian Film
9:40	12:40	Music Videos
10:15	13:15	Exclusive
10:40	13:40	The Week
11:05	14:05	News in English
11:20	14:20	Cartoon
12:00	15:00	Teleduel
12:55	15:55	Music Videos
13:05	16:05	The Colour of Sin- Serial
13:50	16:50	News in Armenian
14:10	17:10	Serial
14:55	17:55	News in English
15:10	18:10	Defence Right - Serial
15:55	18:55	Music Videos
16:05	19:05	In Reality
16:30	19:30	Seven Women - Serial
17:15	20:15	Soul Mate - Serial
18:00	21:00	Express
18:30	21:30	News in Armenian
18:50	21:50	Unhappy Happiness - Serial
19:20	22:20	When the Stars Dance
19:45	22:45	The Making of a Film
20:20	23:20	The Armenian Film
21:30	0:30	News in Armenian
21:55	0:55	Late at Night
22:55	1:55	Evening Encounter
23:25	2:25	The Century
23:45	2:45	Exclusive
0:05	3:05	Cartoon
0:45	3:45	When the Stars Dance
1:05	4:05	Yo-Yo
1:25	4:25	The Week
1:50	4:50	Blitz
2:05	5:05	Express
2:30	5:30	Seven Women - Serial
3:15	6:15	Serial
4:00	7:00	In Reality

18 December

TUESDAY		
EST	PST	
4:30	7:30	Good Morning, Armenians!
6:00	9:00	News in Armenian
6:20	9:20	The Colour of Sin- Serial
7:05	10:05	Defence Right - Serial
8:00	11:00	Unhappy Happiness - Serial
8:30	11:30	When the Stars Dance
8:50	11:50	Teleduel
9:45	12:45	Music Videos
10:00	13:00	Exclusive
10:20	13:20	Soul Mate - Serial
11:05	14:05	News in English
11:20	14:20	Cartoon
12:00	15:00	Late at Night
13:00	16:00	Music Videos
13:05	16:05	The Colour of Sin- Serial
13:50	16:50	News in Armenian
14:10	17:10	Serial
14:55	17:55	News in English
15:10	18:10	Defence Right - Serial
15:55	18:55	Music Videos
16:05	19:05	In Reality
16:30	19:30	Seven Women - Serial
17:15	20:15	Soul Mate - Serial
18:00	21:00	Express
18:30	21:30	News in Armenian
18:50	21:50	Unhappy Happiness - Serial
19:20	22:20	When the Stars Dance
19:45	22:45	Teleduel
20:30	23:30	Blitz
20:50	23:50	Music Videos
21:30	0:30	News in Armenian
21:55	0:55	Late at Night
22:55	1:55	Evening Encounter
23:25	2:25	Our victory
23:45	2:45	Exclusive
0:05	3:05	Cartoon
0:45	3:45	When the Stars Dance
1:05	4:05	Jokes
1:25	4:25	Cool Program
1:44	4:44	Blitz
2:00	5:00	Express
2:30	5:30	Seven Women - Serial
3:15	6:15	Serial
4:00	7:00	In Reality

19 December

WEDNESDAY		
EST	PST	
4:30	7:30	Good Morning, Armenians!
6:00	9:00	News in Armenian
6:20	9:20	The Colour of Sin- Serial
7:05	10:05	Defence Right - Serial
8:00	11:00	Unhappy Happiness - Serial
8:30	11:30	When the Stars Dance
8:45	11:45	Cool Program
9:15	12:15	Music Videos
10:00	13:00	Exclusive
10:20	13:20	Soul Mate - Serial
11:05	14:05	News in English
11:20	14:20	Cartoon
12:00	15:00	Late at Night
13:00	16:00	Music Videos
13:05	16:05	The Colour of Sin- Serial
13:50	16:50	News in Armenian
14:10	17:10	Serial
14:55	17:55	News in English
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19:20	22:20	When the Stars Dance
19:45	22:45	Cool Program
20:05	23:05	PS Club
20:40	23:40	Blitz
21:00	0:00	Music Videos
21:30	0:30	News in Armenian
21:55	0:55	Late at Night
22:55	1:55	Evening Encounter
23:25	2:25	In the World of Books
23:45	2:45	Exclusive
0:05	3:05	Cartoon
0:45	3:45	When the Stars Dance
1:05	4:05	Teleduel
2:00	5:00	Express
2:30	5:30	Seven Women - Serial
3:15	6:15	Serial
4:00	7:00	In Reality

Satellite Broadcast Program Grid

17 - 23 December



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20 December			21 December			22 December			23 December		
THURSDAY			FRIDAY			SATURDAY			SUNDAY		
EST	PST		EST	PST		EST	PST		EST	PST	
4:30	7:30	Good Morning, Armenians!	4:30	7:30	Good Morning, Armenians!	4:30	7:30	Candid camera	4:30	7:30	Candid camera
6:00	9:00	News in Armenian	6:00	9:00	News in Armenian	5:30	8:30	The Century	5:30	8:30	The Century
6:20	9:20	The Colour of Sin- Serial	6:20	9:20	The Colour of Sin- Serial	6:00	9:00	News in Armenian	6:00	9:00	News in Armenian
7:05	10:05	Defence Right - Serial	7:05	10:05	Defence Right - Serial	6:20	9:20	The Colour of Sin- Serial	6:20	9:20	The Colour of Sin- Serial
8:00	11:00	Unhappy Happiness - Serial	8:00	11:00	Captives of Fate - Serial	7:05	10:05	Defence Right - Serial	7:05	10:05	Defence Right - Serial
8:30	11:30	When the Stars Dance	8:30	11:30	PS Club	8:00	11:00	Captives of Fate - Serial	8:00	11:00	Captives of Fate - Serial
8:45	11:45	Music Videos	9:00	12:00	Music Videos	8:30	11:30	The Making of a Film	8:30	11:30	Cool Program
9:25	12:25	Express	9:30	12:30	Express	9:05	12:05	The Armenian Film	8:50	11:50	Blitz
9:55	12:55	Exclusive	10:00	13:00	Exclusive	10:20	13:20	Soul Mate - Serial	9:10	12:10	Our victory
10:20	13:20	Soul Mate - Serial	10:20	13:20	Soul Mate - Serial	11:05	14:05	Exclusive	9:40	12:40	Music Videos
11:05	14:05	News in English	11:05	14:05	News in English	11:25	14:25	Cartoon	10:10	13:10	Express
11:20	14:20	Cartoon	11:20	14:20	Cartoon	12:05	15:05	Hot-Line	10:40	13:40	Exclusive
12:00	15:00	Late at Night	12:00	15:00	Late at Night	12:30	15:30	Our victory	11:05	14:05	VOA(The Voice of America)
13:00	16:00	Music Videos	13:00	16:00	Music Videos	12:55	15:55	Music Videos	11:25	14:25	Cartoon
13:05	16:05	The Colour of Sin- Serial	13:05	16:05	The Colour of Sin- Serial	13:05	16:05	The Colour of Sin- Serial	12:05	15:05	Hot-Line
13:50	16:50	News in Armenian	13:50	16:50	News in Armenian	13:50	16:50	News in Armenian	12:30	15:30	Armenia-Diaspora
14:10	17:10	Serial	14:10	17:10	Serial	14:10	17:10	Seven Women - Serial	12:55	15:55	Music Videos
14:55	17:55	News in English	14:55	17:55	News in English	15:00	18:00	VOA(The Voice of America)	13:05	16:05	The Colour of Sin- Serial
15:10	18:10	Defence Right - Serial	15:10	18:10	Defence Right - Serial	15:20	18:20	Defence Right - Serial	13:50	16:50	News in Armenian
15:55	18:55	Music Videos	15:55	18:55	Music Videos	16:05	19:05	Armenia-Diaspora	14:10	17:10	Late at night
16:05	19:05	In Reality	16:05	19:05	In Reality	16:30	19:30	Teleduel	15:10	18:10	Yo-Yo
16:30	19:30	Seven Women - Serial	16:30	19:30	Seven Women - Serial	17:30	20:30	Cool Program	15:35	18:35	Blitz
17:15	20:15	Soul Mate - Serial	17:15	20:15	Soul Mate - Serial	17:50	20:50	Express	15:55	18:55	The Century
18:00	21:00	Express	18:00	21:00	Express	18:20	21:20	Music Videos	16:20	19:20	Concert
18:30	21:30	News in Armenian	18:30	21:30	News in Armenian	18:30	21:30	News in Armenian	18:05	21:05	Cool Program
18:50	21:50	Captives of Fate - Serial	18:50	21:50	Captives of Fate - Serial	18:50	21:50	Captives of Fate - Serial	18:25	21:25	VOA(The Voice of America)
19:20	22:20	When the Stars Dance	19:20	22:20	Fathers and Sons	19:20	22:20	The Making of a Film	18:45	21:45	PS Club
20:00	23:00	Discovery	20:20	23:20	Blitz	19:55	22:55	The Armenian Film	19:15	22:15	When the Stars Dance
20:25	23:25	Cool Program	20:40	23:40	Music Videos	21:30	0:30	News in Armenian	19:55	22:55	Exclusive
20:45	23:45	Blitz	21:30	0:30	News in Armenian	21:55	0:55	Late at Night	20:15	23:15	News
21:00	0:00	Music Videos	21:55	0:55	Late at Night	22:55	1:55	Evening Encounter	20:35	23:35	Jokes
21:30	0:30	News in Armenian	22:55	1:55	Evening Encounter	23:25	2:25	In the World of Books	21:30	0:30	News in Armenian
21:55	0:55	Late at Night	23:25	2:25	Discovery	23:45	2:45	Exclusive	21:55	0:55	Late at Night
22:55	1:55	Evening Encounter	23:45	2:45	Exclusive	0:05	3:05	Cartoon	22:55	1:55	The Week
23:25	2:25	Yo-Yo	0:05	3:05	Cartoon	0:45	3:45	Hot-Line	23:20	2:20	Discovery
23:50	2:50	Exclusive	0:45	3:45	Music Videos	1:10	4:10	Cool Program	23:45	2:45	Yo-Yo
0:05	3:05	Cartoon	1:10	4:10	PS Club	1:30	4:30	Armenia-Diaspora	0:05	3:05	Cartoon
0:45	3:45	Candid camera	1:40	4:40	Blitz	1:50	4:50	Music Videos	0:45	3:45	Hot-Line
1:40	4:40	Blitz	2:00	5:00	Express	2:00	5:00	Blitz	0:45	3:45	Hot-Line
2:00	5:00	Express	2:30	5:30	Seven Women - Serial	2:20	5:20	Express	1:10	4:10	Cool Program
2:30	5:30	Seven Women - Serial	3:15	6:15	Serial	2:50	5:50	Teleduel	1:30	4:30	PS Club
3:15	6:15	Serial	4:00	7:00	In Reality	3:45	6:45	Seven Women - Serial	2:00	5:00	Blitz
4:00	7:00	In Reality							2:20	5:20	Teleduel
									3:15	6:15	Blef
									3:45	6:45	Exclusive
									4:05	7:05	Music Videos



Sara Anjargolian.

Turn on, tune in: Hye-Eli podcasts weekly interviews

by Sara Anjargolian

“As Armenians, wherever we go we hear stories about interesting Armenians. This is a show dedicated to those people. People who inspire us, who give us hope and new ideas, and who influence our opinions.” That is how Tamar Haytayan Armen, producer and host of the new online radio show Hye-Eli, describes her new broadcasting endeavor.

Hye-Eli features a series of weekly interviews with accomplished Armenians from around the world. One of the main goals of the podcast is to connect Armenians with one another and for the program to act as a mirror for Armenians.

The show has also featured interviews with musicians Gor Mkhitarian and Arto Tunçboyacıyan, photographers Ara Oshagan and Hrair Hawk Khatcherian, and Naregatsi Art Institute founder Nareg Hartounian (see Arts & Culture, December 8, 2007).

“My husband Haig and I both have backgrounds in producing radio shows and when it came to developing the Hye-Eli idea, a podcast seemed like the best way to go,” Tamar says.

Through podcasting, Tamar believes that she is better able to offer an interesting radio show to her audience plus listening flexibility. Since the program can be downloaded for free from iTunes and from the Hye-Eli website, listeners can choose when and where they want to listen to the show, whether it’s on their home or office computer



Tamar Haytayan Armen doing her radio show in Armenia.

or during their drive to work on their iPods.

When listening to her program, one can instantly tell what part of the world Tamar’s roots extend to. Her lovely British accent permeates the show and hasn’t faded despite the fact that she now lives in Vancouver, Canada.

Tamar was born in Lebanon and raised in London. She holds degrees in photography and in business and finance from universities in the U.K. and in France respectively. In 2002, Tamar left her job working for an American investment bank in London, and moved to Armenia to join the Armenian Volunteer Corps.

During her one year in Armenia, Tamar volunteered (among other volunteer assignments) at Vem Radio – an FM radio station based in Yerevan. Tamar launched and hosted a show called Armenian Perspectives, the first radio show in Armenia conducted in English.

“Haig and I have always been

fascinated by Armenian culture, both the old and the new, and we are constantly seeking out talented Armenians around the world who are creating great music and art, producing films, or attaining success in business or in the sciences.” For Tamar, her weekly show is not only a way to preserve the Armenian culture, but also to bring Armenians into the 21st century.

Tamar’s husband Haig Armen, a prolific designer with nearly 50 CD covers, 50 book covers, and over 100 websites to his credit, is an important part of the show’s weekly production. With a degree in jazz composition and long history of experience with Canada’s CBC radio, Haig helps with the technical and production aspects of the show. Typically, one Hye-Eli radio piece will take four to six hours to create, including conducting and editing the interview, and publishing the piece online.

Along with producing Hye-Eli every week, Tamar currently works for the Department of Family Practice at the University of British Columbia and spends the remainder of her time being a wife and mother to her son Jivan.

“I think as Armenians we have a fantastic future,” concludes Tamar, “and for me doing Hye-Eli is bringing forward the positive aspects of our culture to my son and to the next generation. Hye-Eli has no borders and no political interests – it is purely a work of love and commitment.”

connect:
www.Hye-Eli.com

podcasting



Got a problem?
Write Dandeegeen
for help: advice@reporter.am.
Photo: Angelo
DiBilio.

Armenian meditation advice

Dear Dandeegeen,
My doctor told me I am anxious, depressed, and fat, and advised me to try meditation and do some yoga. Have you tried either of these things?

Sincerely,
Hermineh

Dear Hermineh,
Wow! My doctor told me the same thing and I tried yoga but I was not very good at it. My teacher kept getting mad at me because I would talk too much in class and he told me that during yoga and meditation there must be silence because supposedly the meditation and quietness will help calm me down.

Well, let me tell you something Hermineh, staying quiet for so long makes me even more anxious. I don't know if Armenians are meant to be quiet for so long. Maybe meditation is not for us.

For some reason talking a lot makes me feel better and more peaceful. Like when I call my friend Seta and I talk to her for hours on the phone about how Hourig and Koko Hovsepian did not contribute one cent to their daughter's wedding, or how Lucy Keranian's nose job looks awkward on her face, or how Seta Berlerian's house went into foreclosure because of the housing market, For some reason, just talking about these things makes me feel good, in a weird way.

So forget yoga and instead pick up the phone and talk talk talk – this is the Dandeegeen's best meditation advice. I really think this exercise is the equivalent of transcendental meditation.

Also, drinking Armenian coffee is a nice relaxant, especially when my neighbor Mariam drops by to

drink coffee with me; her stories are so boring, after listening to her for only 10 minutes, its like I just took a whole bottle of xanax.

And dear Hermineh, when you have those nights when you can't go to sleep, the best thing to do is turn on Armenian television and just listen to the newscasters say the news really fast in the

same tone for hours – its amazing how their lips don't move and the intonation in their voice never changes. Just listening to the drone of their news report is like a sedative and it will put you to sleep in no time.

Sirov,
Dandeegeen.



Nina Hovnanian injects color into the Armenian winter

YEREVAN – On December 4, Armenian designer Nina Hovnanian's winter collection of fashions for women and children was launched with a show at Treasures of Armenia, a tony boutique in Yerevan. The event was the first of a series of fashion shows by various designers planned by Treasures of Armenia.

Inspired by the holiday season, the winter 2007–2008 collection of Nina Hovnanian Couture is marked by a burst of bold styling and rich colors. "My aim is to give Armenian fashionistas an opportunity to usher in the new year with a splash, in dazzling and festive clothes," Hovnanian said.

Many of the designer's creations feature prints of celebrated landscape paintings by Martiros Saryan and others, in keeping with her philosophy of producing "wearable art."

"I create for women who are extremely charming, bold, feminine, and vivacious," Hovnanian told a hall packed with spectators. "My designs say 'Look at me!'" she added.

Hovnanian's children's lines,



Nina Hovnanian's 2007–2008 winter collection.

fittingly labeled Charagigi (Naughty) and Anushik (Pretty), are for "all those little ones who like to wave their skirts, run around, and frolic," she said. ☞

connect:
www.ninacouture.com

levity

~~FIND OUT WHY~~
~~YOU SHOULDN'T~~
SEE THIS.



Roger Kupelian's award-winning war-zone documentary about Artsakh's war for independence was banned by the Turkish lobby.

This newly-released, special-edition DVD also features the sequel, *Hands and a Homeland*, digitally re-mastered sound, and an animated history of the Armenian Culture from the beginning of time.

Order it online: www.fugitivestudios.com from the Company Store. Also available at Sardarabad Books, (818) 500-0790, Abril Books: (818) 243-4112; or The Hairenik Bookstore, (617) 926-3974.