

# REGIONAL POST

#3 / 2019

C A U C A S U S

60

FROM SOGHOMON  
TO KOMITAS:  
An Armenian Voice  
in the World Symphony

04

HAYKAK  
ARSHAMYAN:  
New era at Hayastan  
All Armenian Fund

14

THE LATITUDE  
OF ART  
New international  
art space in Yerevan

26

ARMENIAN  
PROGRESSIVE  
YOUTH  
Putting Youth  
Narrative at  
the Agenda of  
the Country

42

THE HOUSE  
OF VARDAPET  
Interview with the  
head of Komitas  
Museum-Institute  
Nikolay Kostandyan



KOMITAS 150 THE LEGACY  
OF VARDAPET



**MUSCARI**  
Caring for Land, People & Culture

# Gyumri Ceramics

## Revival of Armenian ceramics in the 21st century

The Family Care Foundation and the Muscari Association are working together to improve the life conditions in Armenia. Their activities are concentrated especially in Gyumri, which has an invaluable historical, patrimonial and cultural wealth.

After the earthquake of 1988, which caused the death of tens of thousands of inhabitants, this city tries to get up and regain its once undeniable radiance.

Following this tragic event, the Family Care Foundation was created by the will of implementing projects for the economic and cultural development of Armenia in the fields of tourism, art, handicraft and restoration of traditional values with a strong ethical requirement.

Regarding Muscari, created in 2016, its purpose is to valorise Armenian culture and French-Armenian exchanges. It works for education in France and Armenia and it promotes a better knowledge of peoples, cultures and languages.

This complementarity gives life to projects such as the ceramics workshop in Gyumri, which allows currently many families to live with dignity, thanks to arts and crafts inspired by among others Armenian potters from Kütahya in the former Ottoman Empire, the golden age of their activity being in the 18th century. Always having the desire of revitalizing and valorisation of Armenian material and immaterial heritage, special energy is devoted to the architectural restoration of the city's historic buildings.

The ceramics of Gyumri's workshop are on sale in the following addresses in Armenia:

- o Villa Delenda : 22 Yeznik Koghbatsi Str., Yerevan*
- o Villa Kars : 182 Abovyan Str., Gyumri*

[www.familycarearmenia.org](http://www.familycarearmenia.org) / [www.muscari.fr](http://www.muscari.fr)

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# CONTENT

## EXCLUSIVE

04 **TURNING THE PAGE:  
NEW ERA AT HAYASTAN  
ALL ARMENIAN FUND**  
Regional Post discussed the  
new approaches fostered by  
the organization with its CEO  
HaykAk Arshamyan.



14 **THE LATITUDE OF ART**  
This November Latitude  
international art space will  
open up its doors in Yerevan's  
Vahagni district.



## BUSINESS AND SOCIETY

18 **LUCIANO BERTINELLI'S  
ITALIAN HOLIDAYS IN ARMENIA**  
Interview with the CEO of Salva-  
tore Ferragamo Parfums Luciano  
Bertinelli, who arrived in Armenia,  
to present the Signorina Ribelle  
fragrance.



## EVENTS

08 **#TELETHONARMENIA2019  
TO MY LOVELY ARMENIA –  
WATER AND SUN TO THE  
COMMUNITIES**  
On November 28, Armenians  
around the world will gather  
in front of TVs to witness the  
22nd Telethon.

10 **WCIT 2019**  
One of the biggest hi-tech  
events in the world took place  
in Yerevan.

12 **XiB:  
REVEALING THE UNKNOWN**  
XiB business platform  
recently launched in Yerevan  
with Philip Morris Armenia's  
participation.



22 **BALTAYAN:  
THE BEST SHOEMAKER OF FRANCE**  
The extraordinary story of the  
family and the brand "Baltayan"  
from Lyon, France.



- 26 **ARMENIAN PROGRESSIVE YOUTH: PUTTING YOUTH NARRATIVE AT THE AGENDA OF THE COUNTRY**  
Grigor Yeritsyan, the Executive Director of the organization talked with us about the potential of the Armenian youth.



## KOMITAS 150

- 32 **THE FUTURE THINKER**  
Art curator Nairi Khachadourian explains the real nature of Vardapet Komitas's personality and present the poster exhibition that celebrates 150th anniversary of vardapet.



- 42 **THE HOUSE OF VARDAPET**  
Interview with the director of Komitas Museum-Institute Nikolay Kostandyan.

- 46 **SONA HOVHANNISYAN: "KOMITAS IS MY FRIEND"**  
Head of Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan talked with us about her bond with the master and his transcending value which goes beyond time.

- 48 **ARAM KEROVPYAN: "KOMITAS'S NAME OFTEN TRESPASSES HIS PERSON"**  
Musicologist and musician Aram Kerovpuyan discusses Komitas's legacy, his role in the world music and his being an icon for Armenia and Diaspora.

- 50 **KOMITAS. THE GENOCIDE (NON-) SURVIVOR**  
Film critic Karen Avetisyan analyzes the few approaches to represent Komitas on the movie screen.



- 54 **KOMITAS AND THE MUSIC OF NATIONS**  
How Komitas helped Turks, Kurds and other nations to preserve their music.

- 58 **LIMONJIAN AND THE FOUNDING OF ARMENIAN NEW NOTATION SYSTEM**  
A story of a great reformist Ham-partsoom Limonjian who saved the enormous amount of Armenian musical heritage in the 19th century.

- 60 **KOMITAS: AN ARMENIAN VOICE IN THE WORLD SYMPHONY**  
Historian Tigran Zakaryan describes what was going on in the World and in the region during vardapet's lifetime.



- 70 **KUTAHYA'S ART OF EARTH AND FIRE**  
A ceramic school that flourished from the early sixteenth century to the early twentieth century in the hometown of Komitas – Kutahya.



- 74 **KOMITAS INSPIRED CERAMICS**  
Family Care and Muscari presented the new collection of ceramics called "Komitas."

- 75 **BACK IN CONSTANTINOPLE**  
A concert dedicated to 150th anniversary of Komitas took place in Istanbul.



- 76 **151**  
Independent Armenian artists' project dedicated to Vardapet.

## WORLD

- 78 **A FUTURE SHIFT IN ARMENIAN ISRAELI RELATIONS?**  
2019 may spell a new direction for relations between the two nations.

## ARTIFACT

- 80 **POSTERS OF KOMITAS CONCERTS**

# TURNING THE PAGE:

## New era at Hayastan All Armenian Fund

27 years of profound history and over 1,300 large-scale projects implemented. Today the Hayastan All Armenian Fund is on the verge of a transformation – turning the page and marking the start of a new era. Regional Post discussed the new approaches fostered by the organization with its CEO, Hayk Akhshatyan

INTERVIEW : ARSHAK TOVMASYAN / PHOTO : HAYASTAN ALL ARMENIAN FUND

What kind of transformations have taken place in the fund within the last year, following the Velvet revolution?

— The fund has always been known as an organization that builds roads. Indeed, the first large project of the fund was the Yerevan-Artsakh road. But we have now reached the stage where we want to break that stereotype. We want to spice up our projects with innovative ideas and modern approaches. Each implemented project must have the largest impact possible and include components to ensure its added value and sustainability. The fund has also undergone structural changes by hiring new young professionals who, despite their age, have extensive experience which results in the generation of innovative ideas. We now have a Monitoring and Evaluation specialist who evaluates our current projects. Retrospective evaluations will also be carried out in the future to assess those projects already implemented by the fund. These types of assessments will allow us to learn from our mistakes and implement future projects in a more effective manner. The Fund has never had a well-defined strategy and one of my first priorities was to remedy this. Over 60 people, local Armenians, Diaspora Armenians, representatives of the government, NGOs and the private sector, etc. took part in a 'creative game' and over the course of 4 days and a series of brain-





◀ New head of the fund, Hayk Arshamyan

storming session we developed a well thought out strategy with a clear vision and mission for the Fund. The strategy centers around the idea of creating a Global Armenian network to continuously support Armenia, Armenians and the world with innovative ideas by creating real opportunities for development. We also clearly defined the overall mission of the fund which is “To create an All Armenian network with the sole purpose of ensuring the proportional and sustainable development of Armenia, Artsakh as well as worldwide Armenian communities based on a common identity.

We see the path of realizing our newly-defined mission and vision not only in the development of the Armenian network but also by means of entering new international audience. One great example is our branch in France. In the face of their highly-professional Chairperson Petros Terzian, they did the unimaginable, bringing extensive benevolent resources from the cities of France to Armenia. This money could have gone to African countries or Latin America, but due to the diligent work of the team, Armenia became their target destination. During the past year I’ve had various meetings both in Armenia and abroad and visited partner companies on both the West and the East Coasts of the US and in many other countries of Europe. As a result of our efficient meetings we managed to create an overall image of the Armenian network

## **DURING THESE 27 YEARS, THE FUND HAS DONE A LOT OF WORK. IN NUMBERS, AROUND 350 MILLION DOLLARS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT IN FOR THE PROJECTS IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH**

and came up with a declaration under which all our partner companies agreed to operate guided by the defined organizational principles highlighting the accountability and transparency of all processes taking place within the fund. We will try to keep our operations on the radar of the media and always be accountable to our compatriots. Even though there is a long way to go, I’m sure that the current state of the fund complies with the new Armenia.

**The fund has just launched a new website. What should we focus on?**

— Himnadram.org is one of a kind website. It didn’t only advance our previous website but it also differs from the platforms of other similar institutions. It operates on Google Maps, displaying all the projects we’ve done in the past 27 years. By applying this approach we aimed at highlighting the transparency and accountability of the fund’s

programs today and before. The website also ensures transparency when it comes to our tenders, as the whole information is available online. You may also find the crowdfunding campaign option on our website. Currently, we have only two programs but, hopefully, in the near future, we will be able to put 5-6 programs simultaneously via a rotational system, increasing the efficiency of our operations. We want to further develop this practice of fundraising on our website turning it into a global platform for all the organizations and entities that has a desire to initiate any kind of development within the country and at the communities outside of its borders. Instead of organizing crowdfunding on different international websites people can make use of our platform. The next novelty to focus on is the online donation feature. Everything is extremely easy. In contrast with our previous website, there’s now the option of regular donations (for example, monthly). There’s also this feature called “One cup of coffee with the fund”. We estimated that approximately one cup of coffee is nominal 500 AMD or 1 dollar or 1 euro, and a person can donate that amount instead of having a second cup. In just two steps, one can benefit any project of his/her choice. First, registration then entering the credit card information and that’s it. The international visitors, can also make their transfers via the well-known payment engine Stripe. For domestic transactions, we recently signed a memorandum with ACBA bank stating that even the percentage the bank receives from these transactions will go to a special account, and later on, the fund will be able to use them for the projects of its choice.

**More than 1,300 projects have been implemented. What were the most important projects for the history of the fund?**

— When saying 1,300, we mean large-scale projects, otherwise, the numbers might reach up to tens of thousands. During these 27 years, the fund has done a lot of work. In numbers, around

350 million dollars have been brought in for the projects in Armenia and Artsakh. These include 630km roads and 500 houses built, 580 km pipelines for drinking water system established, 364 schools and 75 hospitals renovated or newly built, around 60 sports and cultural centers and 34 community centers constructed, more than 110 greenhouses given to the families in the regions, 170 educational and scientific projects brought to life. We can say that the fund has done the job of several ministries. It was the alternative especially for Artsakh because they couldn't approach international donors and receive loans from abroad. The fund remains the main route that creates a possibility to develop the Republic of Artsakh. So, the two most important projects that I would name are the two Armenia-Artsakh roads. One road saved Artsakh, the other became an alternative development path. According to the new strategy, we not only have to build the road but also develop the communities across, and these roads are a vivid base for this approach as the Northern regions of the country received a chance to generate new infrastructures and activate that part of the country. The new project in Gyumri is also interesting. In the past 3-4 years, the fund provided vulnerable families and homeless people with 47 apartments. But we understood that there's a need for a change in this scheme because with newly built houses newly generated expenses arise. These people could heat their previous houses via fuelwood but in apartments, they cannot do that and need to pay for the gas. We decided to renovate different buildings in Gyumri and provide 50-70 families with housing, while additionally providing the building with alternative energy resources. We also decided to establish kindergartens and create art spaces so that various artists can come and interact with the children from these families. We will try to socially integrate these people into their communities.

**I had an opportunity to glance through the Himnadram's Annual Report 2018 and was impressed by the unique stories and the format you've chosen. Tell us about the process.**

— This year's annual report is not just another long-read to get dusty on the shelves. This time we decided to tell the unique stories of our beneficiaries, making them relatable to our readers. We invited two authors – one Armenian-

➤ Fundraising for Gyumri projects, 2019



speaking and one English-speaking. They traveled to the spots where we implemented the projects within the last year and evaluated the stories from their perspectives, writing down the narratives in two languages. They presented both positive and negative aspects as well as the challenges and benefits of the projects. I think that it's extremely important when other specialists take a look at your project. Their perceptions were also contrasting because of the distinct backgrounds they have. One author is Paul Chaderjian, a journalist born and raised in the USA, and the other author is Lusine Kharatyan who started her writing career several years ago and lives here, in Armenia. The projects of 2018 were also audited differently as the company we had worked with for the past ten years was discontinued and an international firm via tender was hired instead.

**On November 28th, the Annual Telethon is set to go on air. This year, there's an exact topic which refers to renewable solar energy and water. What has defined your choice?**

— This year's Telethon has a very beautiful slogan based on the poem of Eghishe Charents "To my beloved Armenia", which goes like: "To my beloved Armenia...Water and Sun for Communities". We chose this poem

because it describes the exceptional character of Armenia and its infinite potential. We will also record a song based on these words with a modern touch. It took us quite long to come up with a compelling topic for this year's Telethon. We have held several discussions with the government representatives from Armenia and Artsakh, heads of several communities and came to the conclusion that the most urgent problem to be addressed in the regions is the drinking water. Even though many investments have been made both by the government and by the fund, many communities still suffer from the shortage of drinking water. The solution we offer is quite ambitious, as, if we manage to collect the amount needed, we will be able to provide 50,000 beneficiaries with access to 24 hours of drinking water in Artsakh and will have several pilot projects in Armenia with 15,000 beneficiaries. Previously, the Telethon



was organized only for Artsakh, but during our meetings with various entities, we decided that both Armenia and Artsakh want to emphasize their unity and it would be equitable to have some money allocated for Armenian projects as well. In particular, we will work in Tavush, Lori, and Shirak. The next major problem we saw was related to the lack of alternative energy resources in the regions. We already have the experience with the solar energy as our French partners initiated a placement of solar panels and heaters in several regions of Armenia and Artsakh. Based on our previous experience, we decided to place photovoltaic panels on public buildings, namely schools, hospitals, community centers, cultural houses, etc. If everything goes well, we will allocate around 1 million US dollars for these solar energy projects. The amounts saved by means of this project can be directed to the further development of these communities.

**How would you describe a typical benefactor of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund?**

— I cannot name an exact type of a person, because our citizens and the diaspora are so diverse. But I would like to mention that we strongly emphasize people's inclusion. If 500,000 Armenians donate 5 dollars every day, it will be a success for me. It's not only about the money but also about involvement and having a sense of ownership towards your homeland. On our website, we have a special section for in-kind donations

**THE TIME HAS COME FOR ALL ARMENIAN MESSAGES TO BE SENT OUT FROM ARMENIA, BECAUSE LIVING HERE, WE KNOW AND UNDERSTAND OUR NEEDS AND VISIONS MORE ACCURATELY**

and if anyone wants to contribute to the development of Armenia and Artsakh, this is yet another option. If you are a doctor or a constructor, you can benefit your country. If you want to contribute to an exact community via the fund, you can do it. It's all about the people. We have a very strong community in France, in LA, etc. There's this small community in Toronto that manages to collect quite some huge amounts. Last year, they collected around 1 million US dollars. Just three days ago, they did the 2019 Telethon and brought around 670,000 dollars, which is unprecedented because we didn't have a large-scale donor there. In the same way, we had a Telethon dedicated to Gyumri in LA and quite an impressive amount of money was collected just from small donations. This brings us to the idea of crowdfunding – to a value created by thousands of people.

**There's a stereotype that AAF is diaspora collecting money for Armenia. Do we have an active engagement with locals?**

— Of course, we have and yes, it's a stereotype because last year we received around 1.5 million US dollars only from local Armenians. I'm sure that this year, again, we will have the same result. By the way, the first four hours of the upcoming Telethon will be broadcasted from Armenia by the Public Television and after that, the estafette will be given to the LA channel and they will continue the fundraising. The time has come for All Armenian messages to be sent out from Armenia, because living here, we know and understand our needs and visions more accurately.

**Can you imagine a day when Armenia won't need the fund? Or even in case of economic welfare, still there will be a need for the Himmnadram?**

— Look, currently, we're trying to shift from the benevolence to the development programs and I will be happy if one day the fund transforms into an engine bringing investments and financial flows to Armenia. In other words, it will turn into a business organization that benefits Armenia and the diaspora on economic, cultural and educational levels while having its dividends. But for the upcoming several years, I believe there's a need for the fund, especially now when after its recent transformation, the trust towards the organization has increased. The fund is a model of a network which can later be used for all Armenian development. We can create models which the government may take and implement on a larger scale. Currently, the fund is a mix of various projects and I will be thrilled to know that in ten years, they will say – yes, AAF no longer does benevolence projects and has created an all Armenian network which benefits Armenia, all Armenian communities abroad, and the world. By the way, one of the directions mentioned in our strategy is the projects to be implemented in the diaspora communities as well because it's time to develop this give-back culture. The diaspora has helped us for many years and the time has come for the citizens of Armenia to solve the issues that the diaspora has. ♦



# #TELETHONARMENIA2019

## To My Beloved Armenia – Water and Sun to the Communities

On November 28, Armenians around the world will congregate around their TVs, with one hand on the phone, to witness the annual event for the 22nd time. For many years, the donations collected as a result of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund's Telethons has allowed the Fund to implement ground-breaking projects in Artsakh. This year, the format has changed, breathing fresh air into this uniting tradition. The 2019 Telethon is just around the corner. What's new, what to expect and what did we inherit from the Telethons of previous years.

TEXT : MARGARIT MIRZOYAN / PHOTO : HAYASTAN ALL ARMENIAN FUND

As the Telethon of 2019 approaches, thoughts come and go whether this format is still applicable, taking into account the technological and social advancements taking place in Armenia. But for many years, the Telethon has met the expectations of all Armenians, bringing change and delight to the communities in Artsakh. For instance, the donations made for the 2013 Telethon and 2014 enabled the construction of the Vardenis – Martakert road which connects Armenia and Artsakh at the Northern part of the latter. The Fund and the Telethon, in particular, always had critical importance for Artsakh, as due to the local geopolitical situation, it couldn't apply for international funding and loans. This alternative enabled them to keep the path of development, have new roads and provide housing to the people who had lost their homes during the war. The Fund has organized Telethons in North and South America and several European countries, bringing both large and small amounts but significant support to the homeland in both cases. In 2018, the Brazilian branch of the Fund raised around 30 thousand, the Armenian community in Europe raised around 1,7 million, Armenia raised more than 1,3 million US dollars. All these donations were added to the 2018 Telethon (11,1 million US dollars raised during the airtime) and directed to the corresponding projects. The fundraising continued till



◀  
At the call center during the Telethon



the end of the year with 16 million US dollars' pledged. In 2017, 12,5 million US dollars was pledged but the record belongs to 2008 Telethon when donations exceeded the 35 million dollars bar.

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Continuing this tradition, the 2019 Telethon will carry the slogan "To My Beloved Armenia – Water and Sun to Communities" The latter will definitely sound familiar to the reader. The poem of Yeghishe Charents served as its base. According to the HAAF team, Charent's poem perfectly highlights the potential of Armenia and Artsakh and the future outlook of both countries. The slogan also defines the topic of this year, namely, drinking water and renewable solar energy. For many years, the Fund has implemented drinking water projects in Artsakh, but despite the large-scale investments, there are still settlements where there's a lack of adequate water infrastructure with only sporadic two hour slots of access to water throughout the day, In Armenia there are also regions where the water system requires urgent repair. If the Telethon goal is reached, 50.000 beneficiaries from Artsakh and 15.000 beneficiaries from Armenian communities will be a part of the project and will receive 24/7 access to clean drinking water. The next topic of the Telethon is a relatively new direction for the Fund. As a result of the Telethon, many schools,



^  
Kindergarten constructed by the support of HAAF

kindergartens, hospitals, community centers, and other public buildings will receive solar panels. This will enable significant savings and use those for the further development of the communities. This project budget is approximately 1 million USD. For the first time in 27 years, the first four hours of the Telethon will be broadcast from Armenia via the Armenian Public TV Channel then the baton will be passed on to Los Angeles. During the Telethon broadcast, the hosts will link with various partners of the Fund from Australia to New York, France and Buenos Aires.

There are several reasons for starting the Telethon from Armenia itself. The Executive Director of HAAF Hayk Arshamyan is convinced that the time has come for Armenia to be the hub that connects and communicates with Armenians around the world. Additionally, starting from this year, the Telethon will not only be dedicated to

development projects in Artsakh but also Armenia. In particular, several pilot projects will be implemented in Tavush, Lori, and Shirak regions. Also, during various meetings with worldwide communities as well as with the governments of Armenia and Artsakh, it has become evident that both countries now strive to emphasize their unity, and this is the right time to start raising money for projects in Armenia as well.

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The Fund is currently going through a massive transformation, redefining and developing all aspects of its operations, emphasizing inclusivity, professionalism, transparency, accountability and added value. With a fresh approach and a new passion for change and innovation, the Fund will continue this global Armenian initiative with an outlook to turn the annual Telethon into a reminder of the year-round profound work, support and donations. ♦

# WCIT 2019

World Congress on Information Technology is the largest IT Congress for innovators and entrepreneurs. This October the greatest minds of the industry gathered in Yerevan to share their ideas on present and future of high technologies, once again marking Armenia as one of the hot spots of the world IT.

PHOTO : BIAYNA MAHARI, UCOM

▼  
Nikol Pashinyan on the opening of WCIT



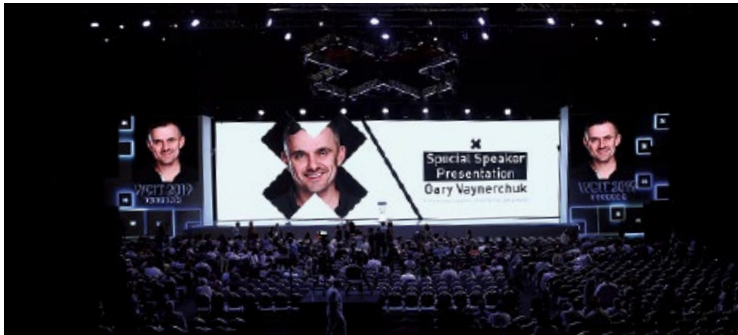
◀  
Heads of Intel and Ucom's executive director



Biggest Armenian IT companies represented at WCIT



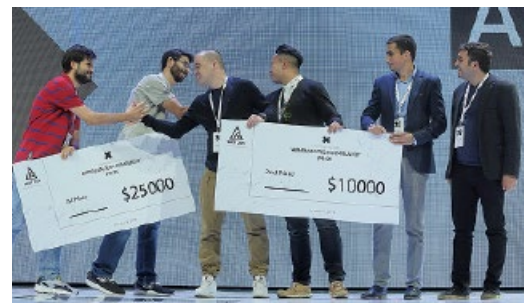
Alexandr Yesayan, President of the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises and chairman of the WCIT 2019 organizing committee



A digital marketing guru Gary Vaynerchuk

Kim Kardashian

Serj Tankian



# XiB:

## REVEALING THE UNKNOWN

A new platform that incorporates all things in business, XiB, recently launched in Yerevan. Event was organized by Think Studio, a company that a few years ago brought TEDx Yerevan. XiB's first edition was dedicated to the topic of leadership and was presented by Philip Morris Armenia. Company's top management shared their personal experiences, perceptions and explored new paradigms of leadership practices.



^ Tatevik Hovhannisyany,  
Nina Grigoryan and ThinkStudio  
founder Kristine Sargsyan



^ Mariam Tavberidze,  
Manager Consumer Journey

< XiB is a place to look for insights that are otherwise carefully hidden in the privacy of these big corporations.



^ Musical intermission by the rock band Empyray

> Corporate Affairs Communications Executive Tatevik Hovhannisyan and Manager Alliances and Planning Mariam Davtyan



^ Vahe Danielyan, Manager External Affairs, Scientific Engagement & Innovation of Philip Morris Armenia



> Natalia Mayorova, General Manager of Philip Morris Armenia

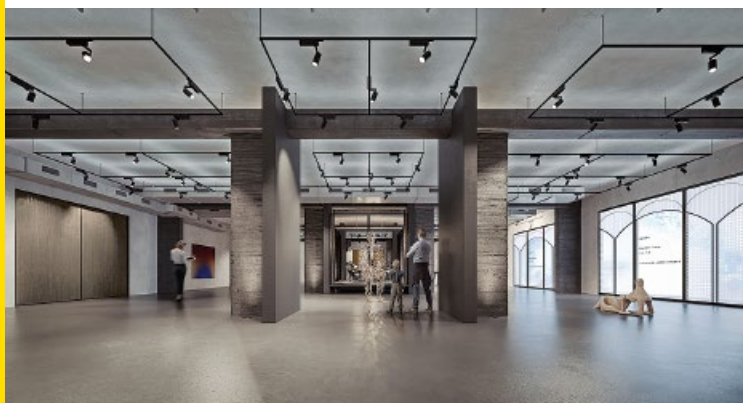


^ Supervisor Capability Building and Employee Engagement Nina Grigoryan

# THE LATITUDE OF ART

TEXT : MARGARIT MIRZOYAN / PHOTO : LATITUDE

On November 21st, the art space LATITUDE will open its doors in the Vahakni district of Yerevan, with a strong commitment to nurturing the presence of contemporary art in Armenia. Curated exhibitions, community outreach, special events and, most importantly, educational programs designed for art and professional development will be aimed at building bridges between local and international artists around the world.



^  
Concept design of Latitude Art Space

The term latitude can refer to either a scope for freedom of action or thought, or, as more commonly known, latitude is the coordinate of an exact point on earth, which specifies its distance from north to south. The constant lines of latitude run as parallel circles from east to west embracing the world and connecting the dots. The art space, LATITUDE, introduced by ICAE (International Contemporary Art Exhibition), hopes to embody all of these characteristics. The brand new, 400 square meter space is designed by Italian architect and interior designer Marina Ranieri. The art space will open its doors with an inaugural curated exhibition of five international contemporary artists in the third week of November. In addition to hosting long running exhibitions by local and visiting artists, LATITUDE will be open to the public for special events,



◀ Students of Panos Terlemezyan State College of Fine Arts actively working with Kevork Mourad on the implementation of his Artwork, The Immemorial, produced and exhibited during ICAE2018 in Yerevan

▶ Imran Qureshi, setting up the Artwork: And They Still Seek The Traces of Blood, 2018 – produced and exhibited during ICAE2018 in Yerevan

◀ And They Still Seek The Traces of Blood, 2018  
Variable dimensions  
Photo by Ed Tadevossian  
© Imran Qureshi  
Site-specific installation,  
Hay Art  
Yerevan



▼ Critici ostinati ritmici, 2010



educational programs, workshops, professional training courses, lectures and any number of activities devoted to developing cross-cultural relations and furthering professional art development in Armenia.

The Italian director of ICAE, Fabio Lenzi, who is residing in Armenia, has been increasingly involved in art and culture. The ICAE2018 exhibition was the first of its kind and largest international contemporary art exhibition held in Armenia, and involved 74 artists from 25 countries, out of which many were local Armenian, contemporary artists. Lenzi believes that LATITUDE will be a great step forward in our mission to link the Armenian art scene with contemporary artists of international significance, promote cultural diversity through open source education and vocational training, and develop Armenia's burgeoning contemporary art scene. In 2018 Lenzi brought certified art handlers from Italy to complete the task of setting up the 2018 exhibition. "As you can imagine, I really want to

always work with Armenian professionals and avoid using outside help whenever possible. With this goal in mind we can build on Armenia's strength as a cultural powerhouse with a lot to offer."

LATITUDE will provide public access to artistic and professional development. Specific programs are in development with established educational partners for apprenticeships, and long and short courses which will provide certified art professionals. English language classes will also be included as an important component for this kind of professional development. The overall curriculum for the art space will be designed by a local specialist, who will map out the program for the upcoming year.

In addition to operating as an educational space, LATITUDE will host curated exhibitions. The inaugural exhibition, will feature five international contemporary artists who previously participated in the ICAE2018 exhibition, and includes



∨  
Victor Ekhkhamenor heading a workshop in Yerevan with the students of the Panos Terlemezyan State College of Fine Arts

∧  
Walid Siti, setting up the Artwork: Stone Tales, 2018 – produced and exhibited during ICAE2018 in Yerevan



## ARTIST'S QUOTES

### VICTOR EHIKHAMENOR

The most memorable part of my first trip to Armenia in 2018 was working with the young students at the Panos Terlemezyan Yerevan State College of the Arts. The energy and enthusiasm and creativity of the young artists was so captivating, I could have spent far more than the week I did with them. While they were supposed to be learning from me, it was the other way around because I learned so much about the culture in a new country. I believe this cross cultural exchange is very important in the development of contemporary art in Armenia.

### ROBERTO PUGLIESE

My participation in the Latitude project, starts from the premise of expanding my knowledge of Armenian culture and art, bringing in exchange my art and culture, opening new dialogues in a new space for artistic practices and new connections.

### WALID SITI

After last year's meaningful cultural experiences at ICAE2018 exhibition I was hoping to return to Yerevan to further engage with the thriving art scene. I am thrilled to participate in the opening of Latitude space. Knowing the team behind this emerging platform for contemporary art I am confident that this project will have a major impact on the development of visual art in Armenia.

### KEVORK MOURAD

I am excited to be part of the Latitude project. It's a dream come true for someone like me to be able to come to Armenia to share my skills with local young art students and young professionals to share with them how I work internationally and to inspire them.

### IMRAN QURESHI

It was an unexpected and unusual experience for me to exhibit and work on a site specific installation in Armenia for ICAE 2018 last year. I had no idea about Armenia, with no idea about its people, its culture or art. Everything was a great surprise and very exciting for me. Armenia and its people, for some unknown reason, didn't appear to me like complete strangers but the opposite. The contemporary art was another surprise in so many good ways. Armenia's history in the Soviet Union made me feel very nostalgic as my childhood had too many memories from the Russia-Afghan war days and its effect on Pakistan. These experiences gave me a tremendous experience and created many memories while I was installing my work there.

This is the reason that I immediately accepted this invitation and this opportunity to exhibit here again at LATITUDE for their inaugural show. This will help the people of Armenia not only to see and experience my art, opening up new doors for dialogue through art, but also will make me feel more connected with them too.



▲ Kevork Mourad, setting up his Artwork: The Immemorial, 2018 – produced and exhibited during ICAE2018 in Yerevan



▶ Artist Victor Ehikhamenor with Fabio Lenzi, Executive Director of ICA

Italian artist Roberto Pugliese, Iraqi Kurd Walid Siti, Pakistani Imran Qureshi, Nigerian Victor Ehikhamenor and Syrian-Armenian Kevork Mourad. This group was pleased to return to Armenia after their successful experience with ICAE2018, where they also conducted workshops at TUMO and at Panos Terlemezyan Yerevan State College of Arts as well as creating some onsite installations with the help of young art students.

Co-curated by two curators, the show, entitled "Impossible to Find," will open in November and run until mid-2020 and all works will be for sale. There is a mandate that all funds raised through sales will be donated to an Armenian foundation dedicated to arts and culture. The show will reflect on the geographical and cultural concept of the map, and how we perceive places and borders. This first exhibition is a manifesto of the art space and an invitation to rethink the notion of a map, at every latitude. ♦

# LUCIANO BERTINELLI'S ITALIAN HOLIDAYS IN ARMENIA



In September, Yerevan smelled and blossomed with the new scent of the Salvatore Ferragamo Parfums. The CEO of the company himself, Mr. Luciano Bertinelli, arrived in Armenia to present the Signorina Ribelle fragrance to the Armenian esthetes by the initiative of Burmunk Perfumery Chain. Regional Post had an exceptional opportunity to meet and ask him several questions.

INTERVIEW : ARSHAK TOVMASYAN



Mr. Bertinelli, what is the purpose of your visit to Armenia?

— I'm here to introduce our Signorina Ribelle perfume to Armenia and to the world. This is also my first time here and I am full of interest to understand this place, people, and culture.

Did you manage to travel around the country?

— I've visited the Ararat Brandy Factory, then we went to the Geghard Monastery and Garni Temple. I was impressed by the landscape. I even stopped the car to take some photos. It's totally different from Europe. I found something alike in Jordan, but this is something unique which makes others invest more in your country.

Salvatore Ferragamo is an old classical brand with 91 years of history, but Ferragamo Perfume is relatively young, 15-20 years. What was the main driving force for entering the perfume industry?

— It's an interesting question as it was very challenging when the family made the decision. At first, I entered the fragrance business many years ago, working with Bulgari in Switzerland. At that time it was an agreement

between Salvatore Ferragamo and Bulgari. The latter produced and sold fragrance from Salvatore Ferragamo. After one year, the families started discussions and decided to separate, and the Ferragamo family chose to have a separate division dedicated to fragrance only. Then we started this adventure from scratch, and up to this day, every day is a challenge for us because compared to the industry giants, we are a small company. But so far, we're recognized as a player in the world.

I really liked the scent and the design of the bottles of your fragrance, especially of the Uomo Salvatore Ferragamo. In the Signorina line, I felt like you used the traditional Salvatore Ferragamo elements from your clothes and shoe collections.

— You are right, for Uomo Salvatore Ferragamo, for example, we used one of our old logos which was around in the early 1920s. In this industry, not only the fragrance and the bottle are important, but the feeling of having something special in your hand. Basically, we always pay attention to two things: the bottle design and the quality of the fragrance inside. We cannot compete with the industry giants in terms of communication, we cannot invest

a lot of money in it, but we can compete with them in terms of quality. So, we put money in raw material, in design, and we really hope that the client can understand it.

Talking about Signorina, which is our pillar, we started from a simple idea of the Vara bow, which is an iconic element in Salvatore Ferragamo, and we tried to transform this simple concept with the bottle. We always try to produce something with the DNA of the company. In 2020, we will launch a totally new men's line new line, again with an element that is iconic to us. We always try to keep alive our story through the fragrance.

**I've read that all the materials used are produced in Italy, is it so?**

— Yes, and I'm very proud of it. When we say that we're made in Italy, we're really made in Italy. This is the reality: the glass is produced in Italy, the gros-grain is made in Italy, and even the box is made in Italy. Except for some components in the fragrance, which are impossible to find in Italy, every single step in production is made in Italy. This

means that we have serious control over everything, and we have specialists for that purpose. I think it makes a difference, and it's quite costly.

**In the current world of luxury brands, there are more and more brands that turn into public companies, and Salvatore Ferragamo remains family-owned. Do you think it's a competitive advantage?**

— In fact, we're the right mix. I worked with Bulgari as well, which was a family, then it turned into a public company. When I started working with Ferragamo, it was 100 percent in the hands of the family. Now, we're partially public, but still, the majority is family owned, and it's the right balance between the management and the family. Being a public company means we have to pay attention to the numbers and provide reports to the investors, which is a stress, but from the other side, the family tries to keep the balance. What is the difference between the family and us? We see the quarter, we see the six months ahead, we see the next 20 years, and it's fundamental as it gives us a passion for continuing.

**You mentioned 90 countries. Why is it important for Salvatore Ferragamo to work with small countries, such as Armenia and Georgia, when you would have more sales in a tiny Chinese city, equaling these two countries put together?**

— First of all, we need to respect all countries because there's not only China or the USA or Russia. Recently, we've been to Georgia and Lebanon. I like to say that we just put a flag. We leave one drop and, step by step, we wait for a tree to

**WHEN WE SAY THAT WE'RE  
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THIS IS THE REALITY: THE GLASS  
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GRAIN IS MADE IN ITALY, AND EVEN  
THE BOX IS MADE IN ITALY**

grow. Of course, Armenia is a small country, but there are a lot of small countries.

**I would like to talk about the connection between Ferragamo and the city of Florence. The company has always supported the town helping to save historic buildings, etc. Why is this connection so important?**

— The Ferragamo family and Salvatore Ferragamo himself originated from the small city called Bonito, in the southern part of Italy. He was a poor shoemaker who immigrated to Los Angeles and started the adventure there. Then he moved to Florence because there he found a possibility to produce high-quality shoes. Currently, the whole family is there, and there's a strong link



**WE** STARTED THE SIGNORINA LINE IN 2012, AND WON OUR IN-HOUSE OSCAR BECAUSE PEOPLE RECOGNIZED THAT IT'S FERRAGAMO, THEY STARTED PRONOUNCING THE WORD SIGNORINA, WHICH IS NOT VERY EASY



between the family and the city, and they are actively investing in it. Recently, we've restored a famous fountain there. Even if we're international, the headquarters, the mentality, the heart is in Florence.

**What are the global challenges for the Ferragamo Parfums today?**

— Today, the biggest challenge for us is to continue to grow, honoring the style, quality, and our manner of production. There's a battle of cost among all brands, also having in mind China which is a whole different story, but in the end, we still have to compete with them in terms of cost as well.

**In the past years, to buy a fragrance, the person would smell the scent, try this and that and only then purchase the product. But today, with the emergence of online shopping, don't you think that people may lose this experience of sampling, trying the smells?**

— A loss or an opportunity, call it whatever you want, should be the second bottle, the first one should be smelled to be purchased because one must be crazy to buy a fragrance without trying. You try, you buy it, and you want to have it for the second time. For sure you can do it via online shops. This is what happens in China, they no longer purchase from actual shops.

**What novelties can we expect?**

— One novelty is Signorina Ribelle, and this is why we're in Armenia. We started the Signorina line in 2012, and won our in-house Oscar because people immediately recognized that it's Ferragamo, they started pronouncing the word Signorina, which is not very easy, especially for the Chinese and Asian people in general. Also, since we have 3-4 different fragrances in the Signorina line, the customers choose the bottle Signorina, but a different scent in accordance with their taste. We always try to keep alive the assortment. In February 2020, we're going to launch an important new men's line, but I cannot tell you more.

**After graduation, you worked in the luxury industry your entire life. Was it something you always wanted to do, or did it happen accidentally?**

— I have to admit that I'm fortunate, because to work in a luxury business is one of the best things. You meet good people, fantastic locations, quality products, you enhance your taste. I started working in Bulgari after I saw an article in the newspaper; they were looking for some people, and that's where I started my career. I started from scratch, and at some moment in my career, they called me at ten o'clock in the evening saying, "Luciano, there's an opportunity, we need to start a new project in the fragrance business," and

I said, "But we don't have it," and they said, "Exactly, we have to start it." And I took the challenge. They said, "But we have bad news, you have to go to Neuchatel." At that time, I lived in Rome, I originate from there, and I didn't know where Neuchatel is. So, I moved there for 10 years and started from zero. When we started this project, we were like one room with five people. With Salvatore Ferragamo, again, we started from scratch.

**What is your favorite fragrance of Salvatore Ferragamo?**

— Now, I'm wearing something we will launch in February 2020. During this wintertime, I use more woody, spicy scents, and in the summer, some fresh and citron scents. Generally, I always try every single fragrance we develop, except for women's lines, I just put them on sometimes. But for men's lines, I want to live with the scent to understand what it means.

**What is your most significant personal success?**

— The Ferragamo parfums. The company was to make 1-3 million, and soon, we will reach 100 million. Of course, I'm not alone, there's always the team, but as the CEO of the company, I always tried to lead the company to success. Signorina is undoubtedly an Oscar-winner. It's not easy to win two Oscars in life, but this is it. ♦



Salvatore Ferragamo

Signorina  
Ribelle

THE NEW FRAGRANCE

# BALTAYAN: The Best Shoemaker of France

The story of the family and the brand “Baltayan” is exceptional. Already for three generations, they are keeping the status of the “Best Shoemaker” and “Best Shoe Repairer” of France. Thanks to the energy and vigor of Hagop, Jean and Jean-Christophe Baltayan, a small part of the Armenian heritage lives on the Place of Célestins in Lyon, France, where the family shop is currently located.

TEXT : VIKTORIYA MURADYAN / PHOTO : MAISON BALTAYAN



The story of this family, as of many others, started after the Armenian Genocide. Hagop Baltayan and his family moved from Eskisehir (Turkey) to Marseille with an aim to leave for the United States later. Although other family members eventually succeeded in moving from France, the grandfather of the family, Hagop ends up settling in France. Jean-Christophe Baltayan tells the story he heard from his father, "The father of Hagop had been enrolled by force in Ottoman army when Talaat Pasha sent his notorious order. To escape death and the worse alternative of becoming a Muslim, he escaped from the service in the army to Istanbul, where he could reunite and then hide with his family. After a short stay there, the whole family left for Marseille." For the next years in France, Hagop would be the one to take care of the whole family, working in a sugar factory, truck production and even as a long haul truck driver. As he tried to figure out what he could do next, he decided to become a shoe repairer, considering it profitable "at any weather".

Old movies show us, that many decades ago people wore tailor-made suits and wore shoes specifically made for them by shoemakers. The son of Hagop Baltayan, Jean, followed his father's steps and learnt how to make shoes (besides repairing them) at a professional school in Lyon. But the period was very unsuitable, as the prêt-à-porter industry was booming in the 1960s and only the people with problematic feet were ordering special shoes. So the family decided to go on with the repairing business. Jean gradually fired all of his father's 5 employees and started to do everything on his own by coming at work at 4 am and leaving close to midnight. Jean's son, Jean-Christophe describes his father as a workaholic with an immense energy. "He tried to do everything by himself because he wanted everything to be perfect. My father was good in everything he did: he had a great passion for photography and he was a good amateur pilot. Some of his photos are even kept in the National Library

of France". Hence, the surname Baltayan became very popular and their small family business was considered a luxury shoe repairing shop. The greatest advantage of their work was that Jean knew all the steps of the shoe making, so his repairing was of a high quality. Although the family was mainly practicing shoe repairing, Hagop had already done his first steps in shoe making when he designed and produced shoes for cycling.

Meanwhile, Jean-Christophe was doing his MBA in San Francisco, working in New York and Paris. As Jean was sure, that nobody would continue the family business, he decided to sell it. But his son, Jean-Christophe couldn't let that happen. Eventually, he changed his career and took the charge of the family business. "I felt very bad that the history of the company that was founded in 1936 could end so abruptly. When I was 21, one day during lunch, my father told me he could make shoes. I was surprised because I only knew he could repair shoes, but not to make them. I asked shoes for my birthday and he re-started making them, but for the family and for his pleasure. Nevertheless, after that talk, my life took me to a totally different direction and I moved to the United States to study".

Eventually, Jean-Christophe stopped his banking career and started to learn the difficult techniques of the shoe repairing from his father. He motivated his father to fight for the title "The best shoe repairer of France" and "The best shoe maker of France". His father won both titles in 1996. Jean-Christophe followed his father's steps and won the title "The best shoe repairer of France" in 1999. He recalls making the "winning" shoes at 11 pm feeling totally hopeless that it could win the best prize. But, in the end, he succeeded.

After winning the contest, with his envy to constantly develop, Jean-Christophe initiated the production of shoe care products. In fact, they were already

**WHEN I WAS 21, ONE DAY DURING LUNCH, MY FATHER TOLD ME HE COULD MAKE SHOES. I WAS SURPRISED BECAUSE I ONLY KNEW HE COULD REPAIR SHOES, BUT NOT TO MAKE THEM**



selling different shoe care products in their repair shop, particularly the brand “Meltonian”, which, unfortunately, disappeared from the market. After losing his supplier, Jean-Christophe decided to create his own shoe care products. He created a cream which was the first one ever that had carnoba wax (from Brazilian palm) in its composition. The carnoba wax can be found in many productions, even in food production, because it gives special shine. Today, more than 10 shoe care products bear the brand “Baltayan”.

Years after creating the shoe care products, Jean-Christophe had a joint project with a watch making Swiss group which pushed him to start designing and making shoes to establish the brand “Baltayan”. The unique designs of the shoes, the expensive materials used, and last but not the least the production method made every single shoe exceptional. Every model made, including the shoes with Swarovski crystals, or the shoes made from the skin of the most beautiful and rare crocodile in the world Porosus, cost about 2500 euros. Mr. Baltayan used his patented method of shoemaking to make them more resistant. Currently, “Baltayan” is the only brand that gives a lifetime guarantee for his leather sole.

As Mr. Baltayan tries to explain how the idea of the shoe production came along, he recalls his business model and the key values he wanted to share. “When we look at the international shoe market, we see the Italian shoes, which are very beautiful, we see the English shoes, which are traditionally made and the French shoes, which are elegant. “Baltayan” shoes are created at the intersection of Italian, English and French



**“BALTAYAN” SHOES ARE CREATED AT THE INTERSECTION OF ITALIAN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH STYLES: WE TOOK ITALIAN BEAUTY, ENGLISH QUALITY AND FRENCH ELEGANCE AND MADE IT OUR OWN PERSONAL BRAND**

styles: we took Italian beauty, English quality and French elegance and made it our own personal brand.” The biggest difference from other luxury shoe production brands is that there may be numerous shoe designers and luxury shoe brands, but none of them really masters the process of shoe making. And the clients nowadays are not so trustful to the brands. Unfortunately the 2008 crisis hit the market and Jean-Christophe was obliged to freeze the project and instead, move his activities to watch band making. But the idea of starting his personal shoe production brand was always sticking by him for all those years. He clearly understood, that he needed to change his politics, because he couldn’t sell the exceptional shoes he had made before alone. Mr. Baltayan didn’t want people only to admire his shoes, but also to afford buying and wearing them.

So, in 2016 the company launched its first men’s collection in Lyon and the shoe repairing shop slowly entered the shoe making market. The “Baltayan” logo design was made by Jean-Christophe and it represents two crossed axes, as the name “balta” in Turkish means an “axe”. The company is currently also producing little leather goods and even motorcycle helmets from leather. But the key concentration of the company still stays on the shoes. While the first men’s classical collection was made in France, the collection of the sneakers that followed after was made in Armenia. Indeed, Armenia has a long history of shoe craftsmanship. But what Mr. Baltayan wants is to create workplaces and share his family heritage in Armenia. Today Jean-Christophe is designing a collection for women, which will focus on the comfort and durability, as the beauty is already an evidence. ♦





**BALTAYAN**  
depuis 1936



The Luxury of "Haute Botterie"  
Handmade shoes from a unique, patented, crafts.

Lifetime warranty card of golden soles.

You are a refined and elegant man, for 80 years we  
offer you an unforgettable comfort.

# ARMENIAN PROGRESSIVE YOUTH

## Putting Youth Narrative at the Agenda of the Country

The recent years have become a manifestation of youth empowerment in Armenia; however, this process has begun much earlier. Back in 2009, several students started an initiative which today is a well-established organization supporting youth in all parts of the country. This year, the organization celebrates its 10th anniversary and Regional Post talked with Grigor Yeritsyan, the President of the organization about their path and the potential of the Armenian youth.

INTERVIEW : MARGARIT MIRZOYAN / PHOTO : APY



**From a student initiative to a fully-fledged organization: what was the idea behind the establishment of Armenian Progressive Youth?**

— In 2007, a group of students decided to establish an organization. In that period, there was an extreme lack of student opportunities and they wanted to make their lives more compelling. The non-formal education offers were hard to find and were available only to those who had good networks. The student councils were politicized and corrupted. There were no proper organizations to represent the opinion of the students. We decided to change that situation and made our move. After two years of operating, we came to the understanding that being a non-formal student initiative is no longer enough and we have to take more serious steps, covering not only students but also the youth in general. The issues that we aimed to address touched the whole youth, starting from a low level of civic engagement and ending with high unemployment rates. Eventually, in 2009, Armenian Progressive Youth was established to emphasize the role of youth in Armenia's life from such perspectives as political, social, economic, etc. Another trigger for the establishment of the organization was the events of 2008, when the freedom of expression of the Armenian youth was suppressed with all possible mechanisms. We felt that the time has come to make our voices heard. In 2011-2012, the organization expanded and the team became more professional, with a transition from volunteers to youth workers. Today we work in all regions of Armenia, implementing various programs.

**Directions of your programs are very different: conflict resolution, business-related projects, etc. How do you decide in which direction to go?**

— APY has a very wide target group — the whole youth. We take directions that are interesting to them, based on



◀ The President of APY Grigor Yeritsyan

**THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IS VERY IMPORTANT SO THAT THE PERSON DOESN'T DEPEND ON HIS PARENTS AND HAS THE FREEDOM TO MAKE HIS OWN CHOICES, TO HAVE THE SPECIALIZATION HE/SHE WANTS AND BE SELF-SUFFICIENT**

our research and needs assessment. We interact with tens of young people at our office every day and design our programs and define our priorities by talking to our beneficiaries or initiating focus group discussions. An important nuance is that the needs of youth in the regions differ from the ones in the capital. We aim to work with all youth groups to ensure a diversity of voices and opinions. One of the issues they mention is the integration into different areas, for example, the job market. Unofficially, up to 50 percent of young people are unemployed or don't work by their specialization. It's nearly impossible for them to establish a business because it requires quite extensive investment. The economic empowerment is very important so that the person doesn't depend on his parents and has the freedom to make his own choices, to have the specialization he/she wants



and be self-sufficient. To achieve all these goals, the person has to have a job and to be able to sustain himself/herself. This is why one part of our projects is dedicated to the social welfare of youth and overcoming unemployment. The next block is related to the inclusion of youth. When I say that young people have different needs, I mean that everyone starts at a different level, and we try to ensure the participation of people who need our support more than others, because some of them still can afford traveling and quality education. This is why we mostly work with migrants, economically disadvantaged and physically disabled youth, people who are somehow isolated from the social life and the communities in the regions and rural areas. They need more support compared with the students who receive education and are likely to get a job. >

However, we're open for everyone and the other block of our organization is student exchange, intercultural learning and mobility programs. Via these programs, our beneficiaries can widen their horizons, see the world, volunteer, attend trainings in different countries and use the skills acquired in their daily life back in their homeland. As a result of our projects, young people gain various soft skills. These can be leadership, public speaking, language, and computer skills; in other words, everything that is required to be successful in the 21st century. When saying successful, I don't imply its direct meaning. In this context it means to be self-sufficient, make your own decisions and get the job you want, having goals and a vision for life. One person might want to become a scientist, the other might want to have a stable job, and our mission is to help them design their path.



> APY training in process



**WHY DO WE CHOOSE SENSITIVE AND HARD QUESTIONS? BECAUSE THE NAME OF THE ORGANIZATIONS ILLUSTRATES THAT WE HAVE TO BE PROGRESSIVE, TALK ABOUT TOPICS THAT OTHERS DON'T, BECAUSE IF WE DON'T SPEAK NO ONE WILL**



**We cannot go into details for all your programs, but what are the most prominent ones?**

— The first project I would like to mention is our two schools, one for employment and the other one for entrepreneurship. These are six-month schools for 30 people in each. At the employment school, the attendees are mostly the ones who have problems with entering the job market. They meet discrimination, face unequal opportunities, and our job is to make them competitive. After six months, 80% of our participants get jobs in different organizations. Our professional mentors help to make that process smoother via individual meetings. In the entrepreneurship school, most participants are women who already have their businesses or want to establish one. Here they learn, for example, how to write proposals, and they can apply to APY for a grant in the range of 3000 US dollars. This is a huge motivation for them and we have many success stories.

The next project is called Wind of Change: Empowering Student Activism in Armenia. We gather 30 students and work with them for 5 months at Student Activism School. Here, they acquire skills and knowledge on a number of topics, namely, leadership, public speaking, the art of negotiations, media literacy, critical thinking, project management, teamwork, conflict resolution,

community mobilization, etc. Then we invite 10 foreign experts, who work with our participants on other 10 topics related to higher education. For example, academic freedom, plagiarism, research skills, student rights, Bologna system, etc. After this, the participants have a chance to apply for a 1000 euro grant to organize student campaigns on the topics of their choice. The 15 successful participants travel to the Czech Republic, Slovakia or Poland to get familiar with university life there. If you've noticed, all our programs work with the same group for a long period. The point is to have a strong result and make a change in their lives. It's impossible to do that with one or two trainings. The core idea in our programs is to achieve behavioral changes within the person.

We also have peace-building programs. Probably, we're the only institution that does Armenia-Turkey and Armenia-Azerbaijani peace-building programs. It's very hard and risky, but we think that if the youth isn't engaged, there's no chance that one day we can live in a peaceful region. We organize meetings in neutral zones, two Turkish young people work at our organization and we always have Turkish youth representatives, who come to Armenia and spend here from two months to one year. We also have Armenians who do the same in Turkey to understand both societies and break the stereotypes.

In the frame of the Armenian-Azerbaijani project, which gathers youth representatives from both countries at one place, the goal is to make them communicate and if there's a desire, implement joint projects. For example, it can be a film screening and discussion in both countries at the same time. Then they can meet and discuss the results. We had a joint production of a cartoon on war, an exhibition on the topic of "What is peace?" in both countries. Why do we choose sensitive and hard questions? Because the name of the organizations illustrates that we have to be progressive, talk about topics that others don't, because if we don't speak no one will.

**The organization has been operating for around 10 years. How has the Armenian youth changed during these years? What trends are you seeing?**

— I have to say that our youth has changed a lot. They have become more purposeful, intelligent, and independent, they know what they want. This change was recorded two years ago, in the context of the revolution. 2018 became a turning point for the Armenian youth. We can say that the events of the 2008, later followed by the falsified elections, broke the spirit of the youth, leaving them with the sense of helplessness. But already in 2013, different activist movements started to appear on the horizon,

like ecological and civic campaigns, Electric Yerevan, the movement against the increase of transport fee, campaign for the Mashtots Ally and the Trchkan Waterfall. I think that our youth learned a lot as a result of these initiatives. They found out how to make their voices heard when the government didn't, when one couldn't make their voice count via eligible elections, when someone sold your voice for 10 or 15 thousand drams. This was a good school for them. If in 2009, when we started the organization, young people would start volunteering at 21-22, today the age baseline is 15-16. The youth in marzes has become more active than before: there's a huge advancement. The number of initiatives increased while the number of obstacles decreased and the emergence of the internet and social media had a huge role in this. One problem that we constantly work on is that people from the regions move to Yerevan and sometimes leave their villages behind. We try to create something which connects them with their homeland providing them with quality education opportunities and a job. This allows them to afford to go to a movie once a week or invite friends to places and not to worry about food and healthcare access. For all these, one needs financial resources, for which you need to get a job, for which, in its turn, you need to be competitive and ready for the market. This question is quite sharp in



**I F IN 2009, WHEN WE STARTED THE ORGANIZATION, YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD START VOLUNTEERING AT 21-22, TODAY THE AGE BASELINE IS 15-16. THE YOUTH IN MARZES HAS BECOME MORE ACTIVE THAN BEFORE: THERE'S A HUGE ADVANCEMENT**

regions because there are fewer jobs and education offers. But in recent years, we have seen many people move to the regions. They move to a village or a small city, start something that no one has done before. Still, there's this issue of uneven development of Yerevan and the regions, but the gap is shrinking.

**We live in quite interesting times, so what is the role of the youth in the social transformation of Armenia?**

— I think, and this is also the philosophy of our organization, that the youth is the present of the country, not the future as many claim. They are the driving force of the country, the face of innovations, technological advancement, the developers of the new social and political culture – especially the Generation of Independence – and they are



the ones paving the way for the generations to come. We were born in an independent country and think differently. The youth played a huge role in the revolution of 2018. Let's be honest, this was a revolution done by the youth, but even after that we came back to the point where we acknowledge that nothing depends on us, as we have a government of our choice and it's their job. But I think that one has to be a citizen not only on the days of the revolution but every day. We underestimate the potential of the youth and there's a low representation of the youth among the decision-makers and so, their problems are not on the agenda. It's great that there are many young specialists in the government and 25% of the National Assembly is young. Amazingly, our vice prime-minister is 29. But it doesn't mean that having a young professional at the decision-making positions in-

creases the inclusion of the youth. We need many state initiatives which will reveal the potential of the youth, we need the government to have an exact strategy on what areas related to the youth they want to address. Most importantly, the youth should be engaged not only at the phase of identification of these issues but also at the solution phase, with “Youth for youth” and “Nothing without us” principles. Any project that is assumed for the youth, should be designed with their active participation. Currently, we have no platforms to make the voices of young people heard. We previously had such platforms but they got politicized and lost their meaning. We need to find new ways of listening to the youth because, eventually, around 30% of the Armenian population are young people which is a lost resource, in my opinion. Our society has to change and understand that we’re no longer gerontocracy. The age no longer matters in the 21st century.

**How do you imagine APY in another 10 years?**

— In 10 years, I see our organization becoming more stable and well-established. Our work is conveyed to young people who have the same drive and diligence. Our youth is braver and stronger. I see us having a huge youth center. Here many young people can come and feel equal, with non-formal education and other development opportunities. If you want to become a good musician, there will be all the necessary equipment to practice and do the marketing free of charge. You are into sports? There will be facilities for that as well. In other words, people would be able to develop their talents and make their dreams come true. To make this a reality in 10 years, we have to live in a more democratic country with falsified elections lost in the past. In ten years, I imagine us this way because ten years ago I couldn’t imagine us living in this country, in these conditions, with such an amazing youth. I guess we had our input in making this happen. ♦

# 10 Years of APY in Numbers

**40.000**  
**young people**  
 were directly involved in APY projects

**4000**  
**local and international volunteers**  
 have served with APY

**5000**  
**young people**  
 in Armenia benefited from APY training and volunteering opportunities in more than 50 countries.

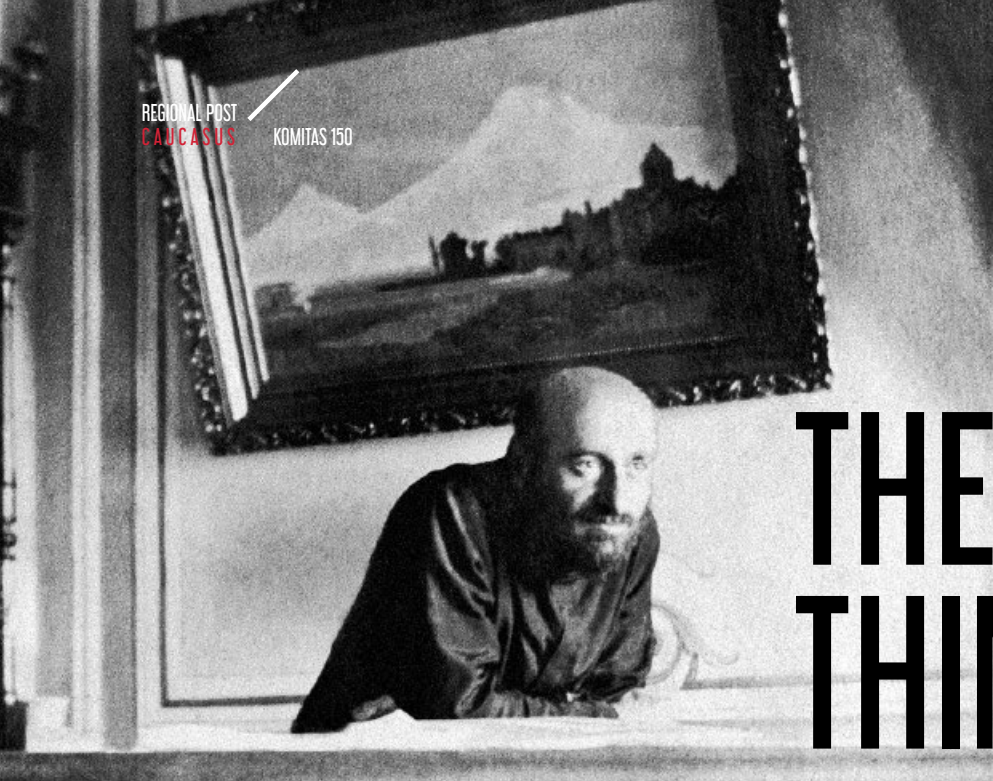
**10.000**  
**hours**  
 of training and capacity building provided to young people

**3500** **young people from all over the world** visited Armenia to benefit from non-formal education and training opportunities offered by APY

**500**  
**local and international projects**  
 were implemented

**300**  
**partners in Armenia**  
 and across the globe

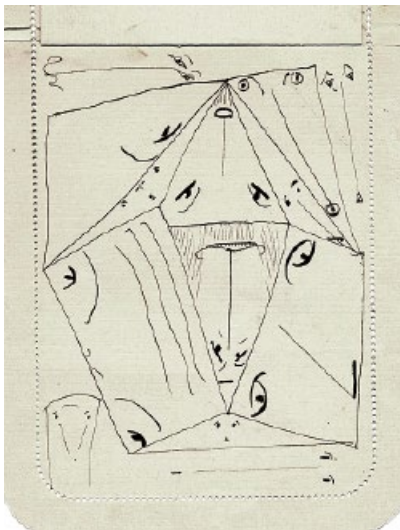
**100**  
**youth initiatives and community projects**  
 supported by APY



# THE FUTURE THINKER

2019 marks the 150th birth anniversary of prominent Armenian composer and ethnomusicologist Komitas Vardapet. “The Future Thinker” is an expression used by Komitas when signing one of the letters he wrote in Paris in 1906 to his close musician friend Margarit Babayan. He recounts about the new piano pieces he is composing and is delighted about the fact that foreigners express so much interest about Armenian music. The 150th birth anniversary of Komitas is the right moment to retrospectively look back at Komitas’s legacy, shed light on how art can become a powerful bond of unity and play a vital role in education and intercultural dialogue.

TEXT : NAIRI KHATCHADOURIAN / PHOTO : NAIRI KHATCHADOURIAN



↑  
Komitas's sketch from his letter to Margarit Babayan written in December 6, 1906, in Paris

Folk music is inseparable to the human condition. Centuries-old oral traditions contain the stories and voices of those who came before us. Woven together, those songs create a rich tapestry of the human experience. Folk music is both a testimony and an artistic production. Considered as one of the fathers of ethnomusicology in the world, Komitas (Kütahya, 1869 – Paris, 1935) devoted his entire life to collect, transcribe, study, compose, and spread the Armenians’ folk and sacred musical traditions. As singing was an integral part of the peasants’ everyday life, Komitas traveled to the most remote regions and rural villages of Armenia to participate in local ceremonies and feasts and share moments with the peasants during their everyday activity and labor, ultimately collecting over 4,000 pieces of folk

music. He used to travel a lot in the villages of Shirak valley, Lori region, Zangezur, and often walk on foot. How many times did he spend the night with the shepherds, in the fields, with the villagers.

Komitas aimed at studying music beyond a purely sonic perspective by approaching music as a social process and practice, as a human activity which is shaped by its environment and cultural context. By engaging in long, tireless, and meticulous ethnographic fieldwork, Komitas inspected directly at the source of each song, studying the birth of each song and looking at what music peasants were creating, why they differed from one another, how they were conveyed, and which were the specificities of each people’s musical tradition. He effectively preserved an extensive musical heritage



Nairi Khatchadourian



of the Armenians for future generations (from rural work songs, ritual songs, nature songs, to love songs and ancient epics), that may have otherwise been lost, and used his collection for scholarly research purposes and for his own compositions. Komitas created a new compositional style when arranging Armenian monodic folk songs. He introduced sophisticated polyphony while maintaining the distinctive Armenian modal scales and musical accents. Komitas contributed greatly to the music world of the 20th century by creating an original oeuvre, both innovative and reformative, where “nature speaks in the songs” as their threads are intimately woven into the fabric of the environment and the society. Next to his extensive ethnomusico-logical activities and his creative work as a composer, Komitas widened his musical practice by collaborating with various artists and scholars on small and large-scale projects: he published two volumes of the folk song collection “One Thousand and One Songs” with Armenologist Manuk Abeghyan (with 50 folk songs’ lyrics in each, published in 1903 and 1905 respectively), he envisioned working on a number of operas (of which one, Hovhannes Toumanian’s Anush, has been preserved in draft excerpts), he

published in 1912 a vinyl recording in Paris with his own performance along with the voice of his devoted pupil Armenak Shahmuradyan, he authored a great number of scholarly articles and music collections, and toured extensively with his 300-members mixed choir “Gusan”. Tireless, Komitas always remained true to his principles and was truly beloved for his exceptional human values. “Hard-working, with a strong will, sincere, kind, friendly, sweet, and modest toward all”, “a brave dancer”, “in addition to his musical genius, he also had side talents, like being a poet and a clever comedian who was well known for his jokes!” are how his fellow contemporaries described him. Today, both the veneration of Komitas as an idol and the etiquette he keeps being given as a victim of the Armenian Genocide are problematic as they veil the deepness and quality of his true calling as a truly accomplished artist. In fact, collecting, transcribing, researching the ancient songs and melodies of the regional communities were part of his artistic process to prepare a fertile ground for creation. Komitas unearthed the traditions of the past and awakened the raw beauty of the surrounding musical landscape transforming them into compositional

works infused with his aesthetic way of expression for the cultural appreciation of all. Being a future thinker, he pushed the boundaries and constantly brought aesthetic innovation. One that is exquisitely crafted and built on light and minimal elements – intimate miniatures mirroring his own delicate soul. It is based on this act of aesthetic transformation that “The Future Thinker” open-air poster exhibition was curated this year at the Komitas Park. Fifteen artists from Armenia, Poland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the USA were given carte blanche to create in the genre of poster art, expressing their sensitive vision of the inexhaustible and multifaceted legacy of Komitas. The exhibition was thought of as an exercise de style where to create the posters, the artists used a variety of techniques, such as illustration, graphic design, photo-montage, typography, paper-cut work. The exhibition, thought and installed open air, emphasized the link between culture and nature, symbolically reminding the origins of Komitas’s art. With the trees of the park as the new public space around which the posters were displayed, the exhibition embraced the here and now, the present practice, as “The Future Starts Now” writes illustrator Arevik d’Or. ➤

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Նվիրված Կոմիտաս Վարդապետի 150-ամյա հորնւյանին

Dedicated to Komitas Vardapet's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary

THE FUTURE  
THINKER

Open-Air  
Poster  
Exhibition

դասկանանքի միտումը վերադառնալիս



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2019

Կոմիտասի անվան պրոսպեկտ

Komitas Park

Համադրող՝  
Նայիրի Խաչատուրյան

Curator:  
Nairi Khatchadourian

28 ave. Arshakunyats, Yerevan  
Open 24h/7

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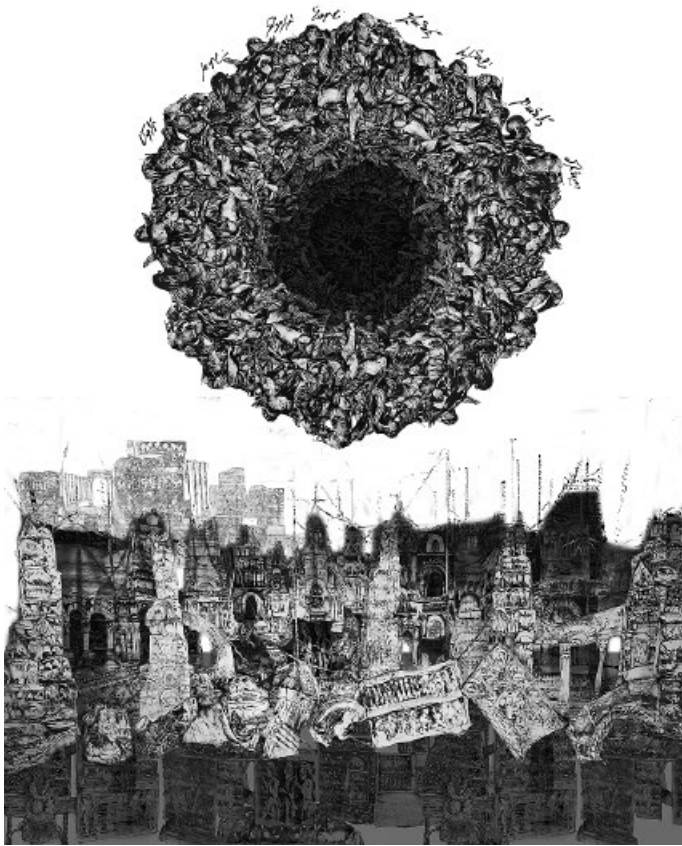
Poster by Arevik d'Or



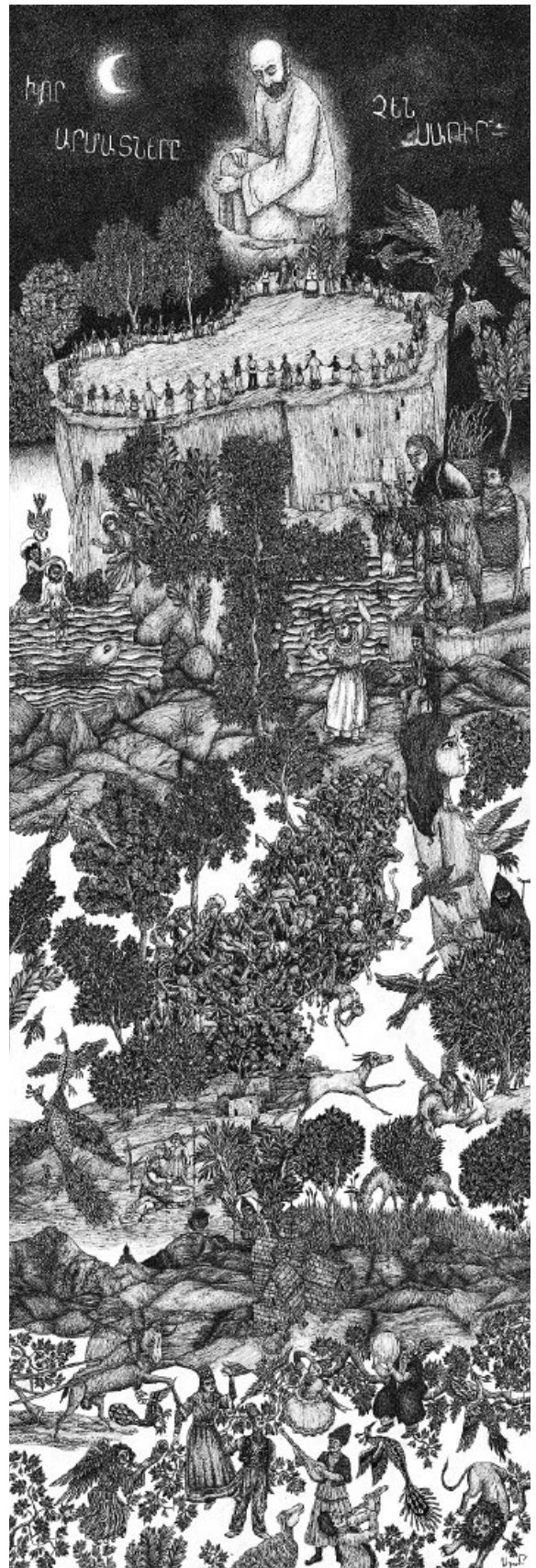
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Poster by Maida Chavak



Poster by Kevork Mourad



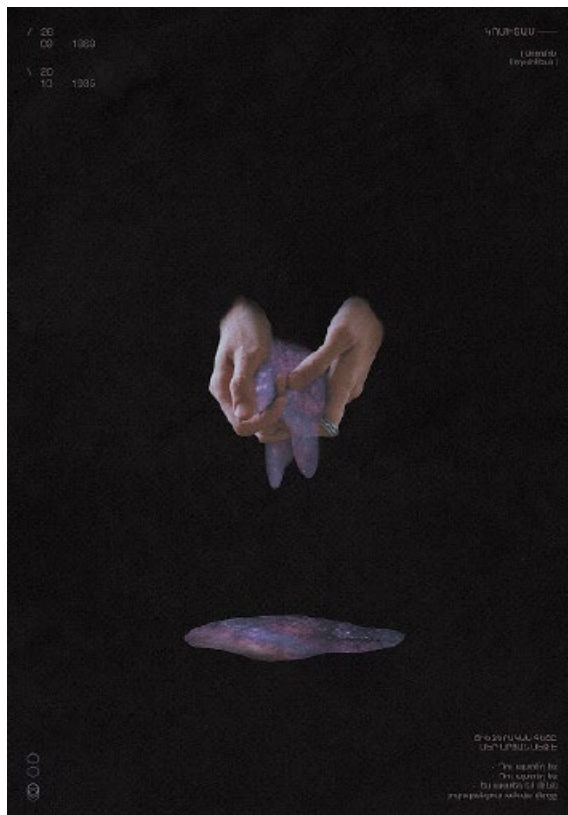
Poster by Adam Rashed



Poster by Tigran Hamalbashyan



Poster by Lilit Altunyan



Poster by Melik Sofoyan



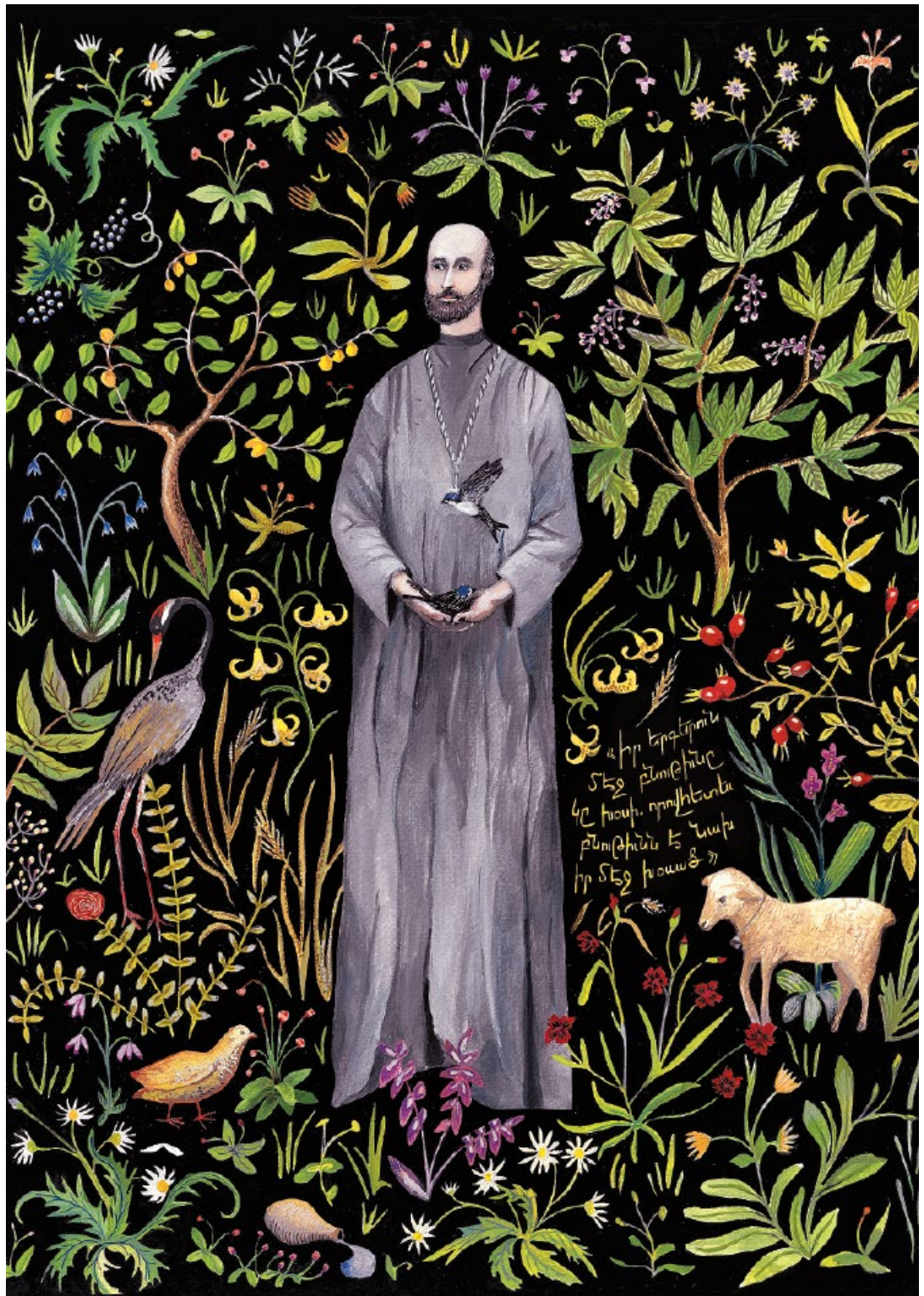
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Siranush Danielyan  
Tigran Artenyan

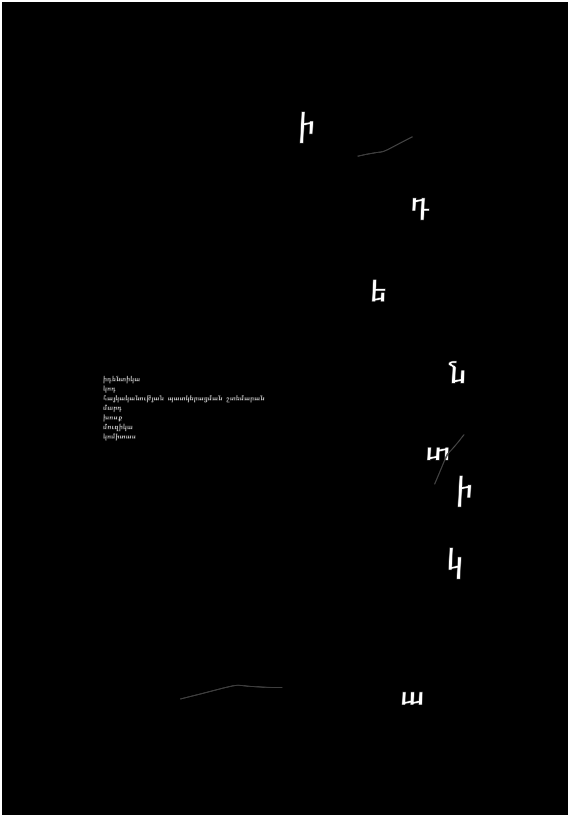
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Poster by Kolketiv design room  
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Tigran Artenyan



> Poster by Karina Manucharyan





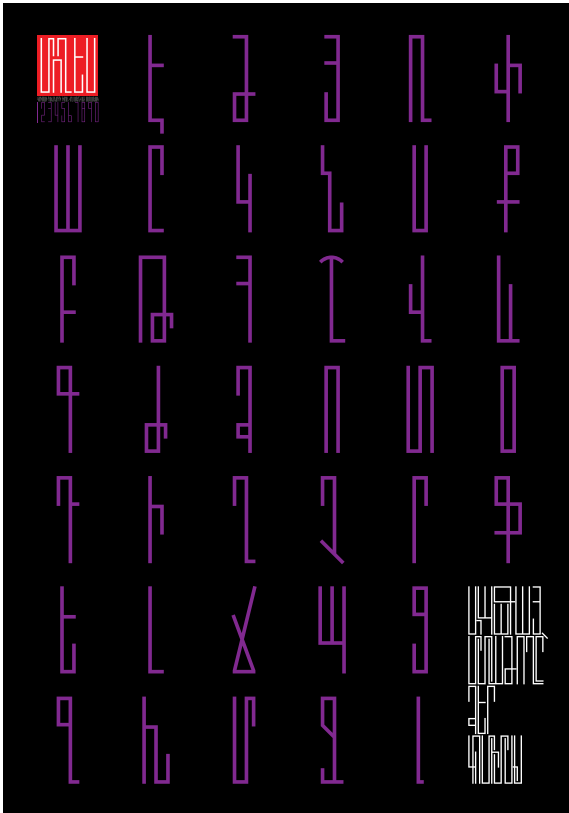
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Poster by Gayane Yerkanyan

Poster by Nouneh Khudaverdyan

Poster by Garegin Martirosyan





# THE HOUSE OF VARDAPET

The peculiar character of Komitas has accompanied the Armenian nation for many years. Finally, in 2015, the Komitas Museum-Institute was established as an embodiment of the tremendous respect and veneration for the master. Regional Post talked with the director of the Museum-Institute Nikolay Kostandyan about what has been going on there since the day of its establishment.

INTERVIEW : ARSHAK TOVMASYAN / PHOTO : KOMITAS MUSEUM-INSTITUTE ARCHIVE

>  
Vardapet's inkwell



The Komitas Museum-Institute opened its doors in 2015. How did it happen and why did it take us this long to establish it?

— It was a huge responsibility to start such a project. Usually, you need the person's house to establish a museum and, basically, Komitas's house in Armenia was the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. Another obstacle was the negative attitude towards the character of the clergy in the Soviet period. But the desire to have his museum has always been there. In 2013, during the Board of Trustees meeting of Hayastan All Armenian Fund, a decision was made to establish the Komitas Museum-Institute, and on January 29 of 2015, it became a reality. The museum is located in the park named after Komitas and is built on the foundation of the former Palace of Culture which the Fund presented to the initiative. The "Pyunik" Pan-Armenian Human Resources Development Fund also supported the project and thus, the Komitas Museum-Institute was established.

What does it consist of?

— It's both a scientific and a museum institution, there's a concert hall where we have around 200 events every year, and since 2017, there's also a Music library which has a 50 years' history and currently operates within our organization. In the Museum section we have permanent exhibitions but there's



also a possibility for the visiting ones. We ensure the presence of both traditional and contemporary artists at our exhibitions. The theme is mostly Komitas and his inheritance. The research department with its prominent team of experts and young specialists, both in Armenia and abroad, examines the topics concerning the phenomenon of Komitas, as well as the Middle Ages and folklore. We have different publications which are both scientific and non-scientific. Ten of them are already published. We also have periodicals and educational literature published by the institute. Since 2016, we're a member of the International Council of Museums. In the past 40 years, Komitas's Museum-Institute was the first museum to be presented at the EU forum for a nomination. In the same year, the educational program of the museum was among the first five nominees and received a prize in Milan for ICOM's world's best educational programs' award.

**You already told in a few words about the building. Who are the people behind its construction and design?**

— The building was designed by architect Koryun Hakobyan, in 1949, as a Palace of Culture and in 2013, architect Arthur Meschian restored it adding a complementary part. The curator and author of the exhibition part is Vardan Karapetyan, an artist who lives in Venice. The designer is an Italian – Alberto Torsello, the general architect of Venice. The building functions as one



^  
Director of the  
Museum-Institute  
Nikolay Kostandyan

whole construction. We have almost no stairs so those with physical disabilities won't struggle to enter the building. They made all efforts to make both the building and the exposition in a modern style on international standards, with innovative solutions, installations and visualizations.

**How did you collect the museum samples and exhibits?**

— When we first had the idea to establish a museum, we decided to bring some samples temporarily. The main archive was stored at the Charents Museum of Literature and Art. We currently have



The carpet Komitas used during his trips and other belongings



a yearly exhibition of 111 samples from there, as well as from the National Gallery and National Library. On the day of the opening, His Holiness Garegin B presented Komitas's pen-case to the museum. Also, we're constantly widening our archive fond via donations of samples, purchases, and searches. This year, our researcher Lilit Harutyunyan traveled to Germany via DAAD program to conduct a search in Saxon archives. She discovered 5 of the letters of Komitas. This is a continuous process. We brought some archive materials from France and Italy – mainly the European countries where Komitas traveled. This is the home of Komitas, everybody should be a part of it. Everyone who enters this museum should be able to find his own Komitas here.



**This year is the 150th anniversary of Komitas, quite a prominent period for the Armenian nation. What is going on at the museum?**

— Indeed, this year is very important. The Vardaped's 150th anniversary is celebrated under the auspices of UNESCO. The government created a special working group for the organization of Komitas's 150th anniversary and the President and the Prime-Minister also got involved. Since the beginning of the year, we have had many concerts, scientific discussions, exhibitions, and publications

^ Komitas's duduks





to present his inheritance and to widen the geography of his music. We had 5 concerts in Yerevan and then the festival continued in Artsakh, with concert programs in Stepanakert, Shushi, and Gandzasar. Then, starting from October 8, a symposium began at Berlin's Humboldt University where Komitas had studied. Then we had an exhibition at the German National Library and the fest continued in Halle city, at the Martin Luther University, where there is the Mesrop Center for Armenian Studies. What's peculiar in all these is that with every year, the interest towards Komitas's music increases all around the world – Italy, Germany, France, and even Japan. Komitas association was established in Japan and we have invited their pianist to Armenia this year.

**I know that the museum largely celebrates Komitas's birthday and it's not just this year. What's going on at the museum these days?**

— Every year, since the establishment of the museum-institute we host the Komitas festival which became international during these years. The music of the modern artists who preserve his music, as well as of the western- European artists with whom he has worked and interacted are also performed during the festival. Since 2015, a symposium has been organized with guests from Armenia, Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Canada, USA, and many other countries. The first symposium opening took place in Yerevan on September 26 and closed on November 8 – his birthday dates according to the new and old calendars. It's conducted every year on the same dates. In the frame of the conference, we invited musicians and scientists who integrated Komitas's works to their musical and educational programs teaching students by his methodology. In 2016, the symposium was held in Yerevan and Haghpat where Komitas's Patarag (Liturgy) was performed. In 2018, Hover Chamber Choir performed

^  
One of the  
museum halls

Patarag in Harjavank, and the museum- institute conducted the symposium at Sorbonne University. We invited a choir from Strasburg to France, after which they visited Armenia as well. Another prominent initiative was the International Musical forum regarding music education, with participants from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, etc. Also, since 2015, the institute has tried to create a scientific environment based on Komitas's music and on what was created after him. This can include scientific reports, publications, relevant studies and archive searches at different institutions both local and abroad. We bring our findings to Armenia, create articles and present them to society.

**After more than a decade, what makes Komitas and his music relevant for the contemporary listener?**

— During his lifetime, he managed to create an inheritance which went ahead of his time and focused on the future. The fact that we listen to him and present him even today, illustrates that he created his actuality. Many foreign scientists and thinkers called him the founder of new music and the founder of Armenian avant-garde music. He was peculiar and modern by his music and by his thinking, and the existence of the museum proves it. His anniversary is another occasion to illustrate our heritage, our culture, and identity. Every year of Komitas is very important and this year as well, we did our best to direct the attention of international organizations, embassies, etc., to Komitas. For me, as the director of this institution, Komitas's 150th and 151st and 152nd anniversaries are equally important. Komitas is not valued only on his anniversary. He should be prized every day, every hour, so that one day the whole world gathers around him. We will be able to create that environment. Through him, we can present our history. ♦

# “KOMITAS IS MY FRIEND”

Sona Hovhannisyan, the founder of the Hover choir and the head of Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan, talked with us about Komitas’s exceptional personality, her bond with the master and his transcending value which goes beyond time.

TEXT : MARGARIT MIRZOYAN

**K**omitas’s role in the formation of what we today call Armenian music is indisputable. He did the work of institutes, preserving the music of an entire nation. He touched all these notes and melodies so delicately and sensitively that even today, he awakens a huge excitement, admiration and delight by his voice and his songs. Just the fact that after 150 years, Komitas’s music is relevant in all its expressions, both in modern reading and in the original version, is a reason to celebrate his life and inheritance. Today, in the base of the repertoire of almost all Armenian chamber music choirs and performers, Komitas is the start and the destination. There are many modern artists, such as Tigran Hamasyan and even one of the Spanish singers – Buika, who present their vision of Vardapet’s compositions. In all its versions, his music is ever-transcending, touching and insightful. The life of the author was quite tragic, but by its essence it conveyed purity and revival which can be felt and seen in every single note of his songs.

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I am in front of Komitas State Conservatory, a magnificent building with huge glass windows beautifully caged in various patterns, allowing

the outside light to enter the vestibules of the construction. Entering the building, the first thing I see is the sculpture of Komitas integrated into a large artwork composed of red tuff, peacefully placed on the wall before me. Later on, wandering on the floors of this building in the search of the rectorate, I see his images everywhere. The spirit of Komitas is cherished and well preserved here. Students are running here and there, one door closes, another one opens, and I finally find the room I was searching for and meet Sona Hovhannisyan. In her office, again, I see the images of the master everywhere; either alone or with his choir. In his definitive presence, we begin our interview.

## SONA HOVHANNISYAN

Komitas is the founder of the professional Armenian composing school, which is oriented and defined by Komitas’s rich inheritance, work, and entire life in all its expressions. Composer Edvard Mirzoyan would always say: “Without Bach, German music would be the same as it is today but without Komitas, we wouldn’t have the Armenian music the way we have it now.” This one person has changed the entire musical thinking,

proving that Armenian music is neither Western nor Eastern. It’s unique and is similar only to itself.

## Timeless Komitas

In our days, Komitas’s word is passed in various directions and with different approaches but for all of us, especially, all chamber choirs, our first composition is Komitas. He’s the definition of a classic. How do we define the artists to be the classics of all time? Their music is timeless. You don’t listen to Komitas as the music of the past, you experience it right in the moment. That is the meaning behind the word classic in this context. The works of these artists speak with you even today. It can be an art treasure coming from hundreds of years ago but still remain relevant. We can say this not only about music, but also fine arts, literature and much more. I’ve dedicated my entire lifetime to preserve and perform Komitas’s music the way it was written by the author himself and that’s my vision of his music. But I understand that each era brings its own allegories. If it is done by revealing the hidden layers of the given composition, then, of course, it’s interesting to know how representatives of different music genres read and perceive his music. In some cases, it’s





the music which Komitas has collected from different Armenian settlements that is being presented, rather than the music he's written himself. Thus, these traditional Armenian compositions are being performed by many artists. I think, Komitas is still undiscovered. I've recently come back from Artsakh where five musical groups were performing. All of us see his music and interpret it differently but we're all devotees and approach Komitas's works with love. Our work teaches us to accept all these different perceptions because our main tool is human, meaning our piano is human and we know how to be respectful in these interactions and contrasting visions of the same notes. Suddenly, someone may discover a new particle in a work which you haven't noticed or vice versa. Our visions of the same music is what set us apart. Notes are not living creatures, you breathe new air into them and they start to live. But there are a million ways of living. One can live a distorted and detrimental life or can have a healthy, well-thought and planned life. We live with these notes for many years and our battle is mainly with them and it's the right battle. We are always in an ongoing dialogue with the same material, with same Komitas. Before our performance in Gyumri, we sat and talked about how

we should perform his music in a way that didn't seem like a mechanical action, i.e., not just words and notes, but a value, visualization, bonds and structure, because music is a construction and Komitas managed to create unbelievable buildings. In a small scale, he managed to input monumental ideas. From first glance, he's compositions are small, not symphonies or operas but in this small scale, he built such strong communication that it creates indescribable feelings and mood from the first notes. This is what music is all about: a blend of all of these.

### Personal Bond

When I studied at Sayat Nova's Musical School, I came across the collection of Komitas's solo and choir compositions. I was a child but could already read his music and I was very much impressed. I was dreaming for everyone to leave the house so that I could be alone and repeatedly sing his works. It was a very important phase in my life. No one ever forced me to do it - not at school, nor in the family. My mother was a singer, but believe me, she never directed me. I discovered his music by myself. When I was applying to the conservatory, they asked me to sing one composition of my choice. I sang one, then two, then they asked me to sing another

one and another one. They were highly impressed that I'd acquired this knowledge by myself and of my own desire. This was the beginning for me. You know, it doesn't matter in which era the exact composition was created. We, musicians, have that special bond with music of all times through the notes. We don't need the inventions of today, the internet or the time machine. We recognize each other by the music and these connections are extremely valuable. Through all times, musicians didn't need the technologies to witness the thinking of humans of 300 years ago. Komitas is my daily water and bread, my friend, my closest person. While acknowledging his incredible value and greatness, I still connect with him as a close friend of mine. He never stops exciting, concerning, or humoring. He's a very perceptive and insightful person. I always come back to him.

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Leaving Mrs. Hovhannisyan in her room, in the company of her old friend, I exit the building, feeling his presence on the staircase and in the light that enters the vestibule. I go outside and look at the master for one last time, peacefully sitting in the park in front of the conservatory, observing the world and maybe composing. ♦

# ARAM KEROVPYAN:

## “Komitas’s name often trespasses his person”

Regional Post discussed with musicologist and musician Aram Kerovpyan Komitas’s legacy, his role in the world music and his being an icon for Armenia and Diaspora.

INTERVIEW : NAIRI KHACHADOURIAN

**As a musician and musicologist born and raised in Istanbul, when did you first learn about Komitas and how was his heritage presented to you?**

— When I was a child or teenager, in the 1950-60s, the songs arranged in Western style by Father Komitas were of course part of the repertoire performed in Istanbul for the Armenian bourgeois audience. Nevertheless, neither his life nor his work were highlighted as it is the case today. His name was directly related to a period which could not be mentioned. It was tacitly understood that the Armenian community of Istanbul was tolerated by the State thanks to the Lausanne treatise, and its security was ensured as long as the fear remained present in their hearts and minds. As the Armenian Question only recently became talkable in Turkey, Father Komitas became a symbolic figure, for all, including Turkish intellectuals.



**How would you qualify the role Komitas played in Armenian and world music history?**

— Father Komitas worked during a period when esthetising folk melodies was one of the styles being developed in Western classical music. He is the manifestation of Orientalism, and probably the most efficacious craftsman of the modern nation-building process amongst Armenians. He became a model for

many Armenian intellectuals in the Westernizing process of numerous cultural elements of Armenians. Then under the Ottoman empire came the destruction of the Armenian civilization together with its peasantry, and the establishment of the Soviet regime in the Transcaucasus. These events created the conditions which made him the starting point of an Armenian national music. This also led to his near-idolization,

— As research on his life and work continues, there might be new findings in the future. Nevertheless, your question uncovers my very thought: Father Komitas who was not only a priest but also an artist, had the natural right to make music as he liked. However, the way he is perceived, not only in the Diaspora but also in Armenia, is problematic, because he is seen only as an icon of national music. Icons are venerated but not necessarily understood. Consequently, his name often trespasses his person, and is used to cover any activity which pretends to be “national”. This is part of a general problem: the complete, conscious or unconscious, Westernization/alienation of the Armenians.

## **H** E IS THE MANIFESTATION OF ORIENTALISM, AND PROBABLY THE MOST EFFICACIOUS CRAFTSMAN OF THE MODERN NATION-BUILDING PROCESS AMONGST ARMENIANS

Born in Istanbul, musicologist and musician Aram Kerovpyan (PhD, France) is a bearer of the Armenian liturgical chant tradition of Istanbul. As a youth, he received his training in the Armenian Church of his hometown. Upon his move to Paris in 1977, Kerovpyan devoted himself entirely to the study and practice of Armenian music, founding in 1980 the Kotchnak Ensemble – performing folk and troubadour music, then in 1985 the AKN Ensemble – dedicated to the study of the modal system of the Armenian liturgical chant and the transmission of this modal and monodic oral tradition. From 1990 to today, Kerovpyan is the master-singer of the Armenian Cathedral of Paris. Kerovpyan is the author of a number of scholarly publications and a wide range of recordings of Armenian church music, performed by his AKN ensemble, himself and his wife Virginia Kerovpyan, or other bearers of traditions, like Rev. Father Vertanes Oulouhodjian, a bearer of the Venice Mekhitarist tradition.

but for the time being, that subject is too sensitive to be discussed amongst Armenians.

**What impact did Komitas's musicological approach and research have on your work as a musicologist?**

— I have read his articles with great interest, but as a musicologist, I look at his work with a critical eye. It is difficult to agree with his theoretical assertions; his approach to modal music is Western (that's where he was sent to study!) and his efforts to give his theory an original “Armenian character” does not show impartial research. However, in his writings, he was able to express the common characteristics of the songs he had collected. He had healthy and humanistic views about the role of music in human life, in education. On the other hand, his song collection, as much as it is available, is an extremely valuable source, both for research and performance.

**How is Komitas perceived in the diaspora and what are the facets of his life and heritage still unveiled or unknown to the large audience?**

**Could Komitas's and his pupils' heritage (folk and sacred music) be a means of education in the diaspora? if so, how should it be approached?**

— Church music was transcribed amongst Armenians from the mid-19th century on. We have most of the traditional repertoire not only in transcriptions, but also as a living music which can still produce new variants. Father Komitas's and his pupils' church music heritage was developed much later, only in the framework of Westernization. It is necessary to make this distinction while speaking about church music. The real heritage is, in my opinion, the folk music collections he initiated. Before Father Komitas, songs were collected, but mostly without transcribing the melodies. The transcriptions he made or collected, together with those made by his pupil Mihran Toumajan, then by others, constitute a cultural treasury. They have an important role which is beyond being purely performative; they are the link to a past musical culture which was eradicated. Preserving this link allows to go forward, because it keeps alive a patrimony rich enough to support creation. In this respect, Armenian folk songs constitute an excellent material for education. ♦

# KOMITAS. THE GENOCIDE (NON-) SURVIVOR

An obsessive lover, wise teacher, taciturn hermit, hospitable joker, maddened priest and tens of other epithets and adjectives, characterizations and statuses that symbolize the same person – the pioneer of ethnomusicology, the founder of a national school of music and one of the most vibrant and famous characters in Armenian culture – Komitas, who continues to make new appearances not only on stages and electromagnetic waves, but also on the big screen from time to time. Komitas as a film character – explained by film critic Karen Avetisyan.

TEXT : KAREN AVETISYAN

## REALIZED

Just recently Arman Nshanyan wrapped production on a new film about Komitas called “Songs of Solomon” with the eponymous character portrayed by probably the most popular Armenian actor of recent years Samvel Tadevosyan and the film itself produced by Nick Vallelonga, the producer behind the Academy Award winning “Green Book.” The film is scheduled for a 2020 premiere on the eve of April 24th, Genocide Memorial Day in Armenia. Before that day comes, let’s throw a quick and general glance at Komitas’s presence in Armenian cinema, at films that made it to the big screen and those that never saw the light of day. The most recent feature length film to center around Komitas is Vigen Chaldrazyan’s “The Priest’s Silence,” where he is not so much a character, but a concept, a coordinate system and



^ Vigen Chaldrazyan on the set of “Alter Ego”



◀ Don Askarian's "Komitas"

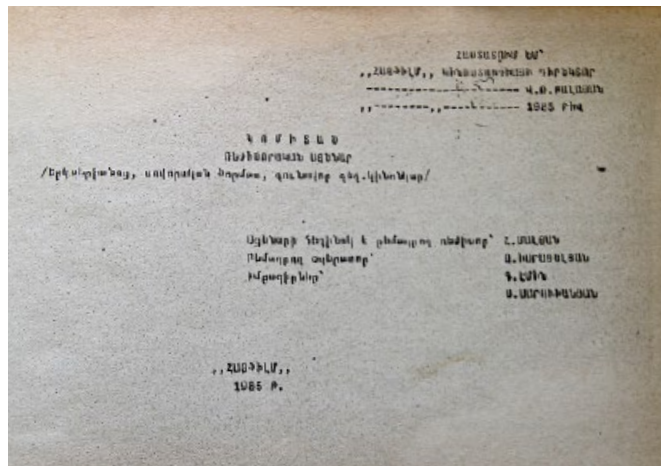
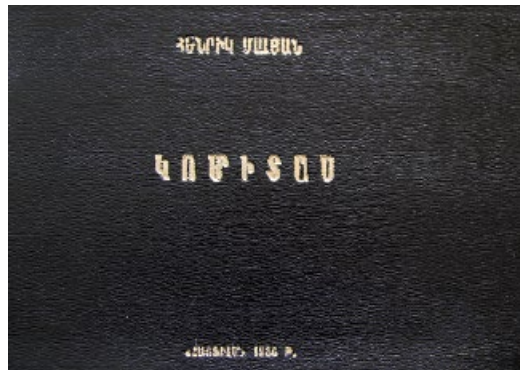
▶ Director Henrik Malyan

cultural genome, a red line in the film and the post-Genocide history of Armenia. The main character of the film is Edgar Novents, a modern-day writer and university professor, whose mind is completely occupied by the idea of creating a novel about Komitas. And in order to give authenticity to his future literary work, Novents dives deep into the life of Komitas, as if becoming his present-day alter ego. Along the way he meets a filmmaker interested in transferring the priest's life to the big screen, who in turn is director Chaldrazyan's alter ego or better yet – his cameo.

"Alter Ego" is the film's international title, while the ego itself is a syndrome, which is associated not only with director Vigen Chaldrazyan, but also another filmmaker Don Askarian, who made his "Komitas" in 1989. Askarian's take is a biographical video poem, hugely influenced by Tarkovsky, Parajanov and European poetical cinema of the late 1960's with a spiritual odyssey that's typical for these kinds of films. It seems like Askarian was not only inspired, but had a rampant desire to "parajanovize" himself by "sayatnovazing" Komitas. Askarian brought his pretentious symbolism

▼ "Alter Ego" shooting

▶ A script of Malyan's "Komitas"



**T**HE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE FILM IS EDGAR NOVENTS, WHOSE MIND IS COMPLETELY OCCUPIED BY THE IDEA OF CREATING A NOVEL ABOUT KOMITAS. HE DIVES DEEP INTO THE LIFE OF KOMITAS, AS IF BECOMING HIS PRESENT-DAY ALTER EGO

to its peak in the film “Avetik,” also making a film about Parajanov himself, and afterwards abandoning his ambitious style in favor of a more “earthly” and “lively” one.

Parallel to “Avetik,” Lyudmila Sahakyants was starting production on her own film about Komitas, which was probably the first such effort in independent Armenia and the first time Komitas was played by a foreign actor, a Lithuanian film star from the Soviet era Regimantas Adomaitis. Sahakyants’ film is a mystery play combining live-action and animation, shot in the same period as Jan Schwankmaier’s “Faust” with a similar combination of genres, styles and techniques, and yet in a totally different context of Armenia’s post-independence, the war in Karabakh, the blockade and difficult social realities, as a result



^ Historical epic  
“The Star of Hope”

v Lyudmila  
Sahakyants’  
“On the Threshold”



of which the film was officially completed a full decade later, still incomplete when compared to the director’s original vision, yet nevertheless edited by the director herself and fully accompanied by Avet Terteryan’s music, who’s 6th symphony, namely its most famous and emotionally striking part also breaks “Alter Ego” in Chaldryan’s film. In fact, Terteryan’s music has been used in films about Komitas more often, than that of Komitas himself, who’s fate has been at the basis of both realized and unrealized noteworthy films.

### UNREALIZED

Back in 2013 Russian-based producer Valery Saharyan notified the public of a big project about the Armenian Genocide being developed with the participation of international superstars and a plot centering on Komitas’s life. The role of Armenian Genocide survivor Komitas was supposed to go to an actor, who had recently shuffled off his Academy Award winning performance of Polish musician and Holocaust survivor Wladyslaw Szpilman in Roman Polanski’s “The Pianist.” Adrien Brody had already read the script and agreed to do the lead part.

The role of the police commissioner, who narrates the film, was to be played by either Jean Reno or Gérard Depardieu. Alain Delon was supposed to appear as the head of the Parisian psychiatric hospital, where Komitas was kept, while Dustin Hoffman was going to play the role of another patient, chess player Spielmacher. Over the years the project has been presented to various filmmakers, including Emir Kusturica, but as of yet it remains unrealized or better yet – frozen indefinitely.



^ Adrian Brody in "The Pianist"

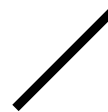
A similar fate had been dealt to the attempted "Komitas" by one of the more famous Armenian filmmakers Henrik Malyan. With its grandiose subject matter, the volumes of pre-production work and the director's suffering it seems that "Komitas," where Sos Sargsyan had been approved to play the titular role, was supposed to be Malyan's magnum opus, realized in the early 1980's, before the Soviet Perestroyka, when director Edmon Keosayan had already made "The Star of Hope," the widescreen epic with a 200 minute runtime about national heroes Davit Bek and Mkhitar Sparapet, on the one hand paving the road for others interested in more national themes, and on the other hand inducing a lot of headaches to the Soviet establishment, the Armenian part of which was headed by Karen Demirchyan, who's diaries reveal that he urged Malyan not to emphasize the Geno-

v "Komitas" by Don Askarian



Wouldn't you like to meet him?

## THE FACT IS THAT ARMENIAN FILMMAKERS USUALLY DIRECT THEIR ATTENTION TO KOMITAS AT TIMES OF SEVERE CRISIS, WHEN HIS HALO OF A HOLY PRIEST AND MADDENED MARTYR IS YET TO BE BROKEN



cide in the film too much. Whether Demirchyan was trying to avoid patriotic themes in general or just did not want Komitas to be presented with the massacres as background (which was predominantly his context both prior and after in various cultural incarnations) has remained a mystery. However there is another interesting theory, according to which during archival research Malyan discovered "the other side of Komitas," where the priest, usually portrayed as a saint, appeared in humanly and earthy colors with earthy beloveds, amorous ties, and not least of all as a victim, yet not so much of the cruel Turkish bloodshed, but of ridiculous church intrigues, collegial reluctance and faint-heartedness.

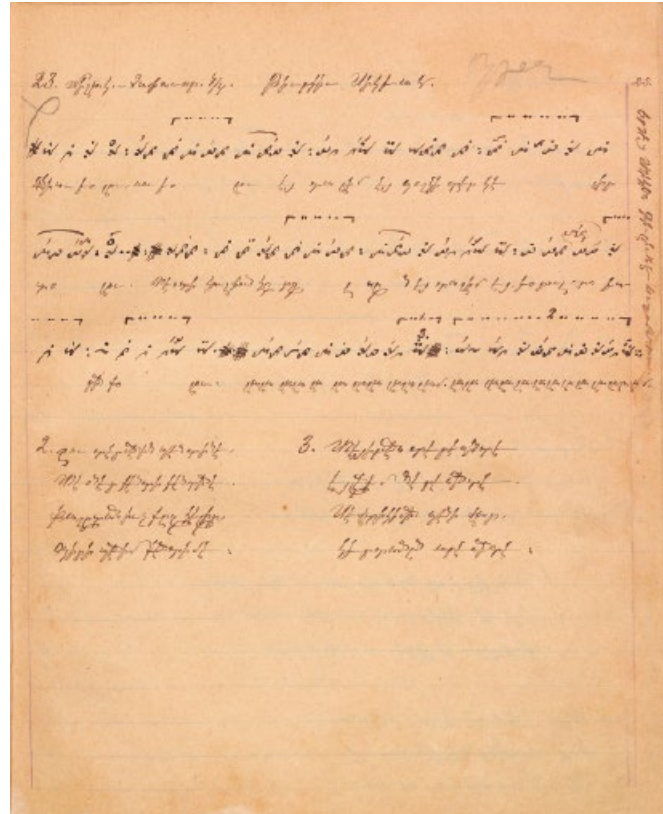
As a man of a deductive artistic approach in cinema, Malyan decided not to take that risk, but whether it was the fear of discovering Komitas from a humane point of view that kept the film from being made or the reluctance to break a cherished stereotype, which is typical of Armenian culture, will also remain a mystery.

The fact is that Armenian filmmakers usually direct their attention to Komitas at times of severe crisis, when his halo of a Holy Priest and Maddened Martyr is yet to be broken. The halo itself on the one hand has developed an enormous cultural straiten, yet on the other hand it hindered an artist's ability to speak of Komitas not as a "means," but as a fully fleshed out, transparent and vulnerable "end." As was said before, the upcoming film about Komitas will have its premiere on April 23rd, 2020, which probably means that having miraculously survived the Genocide in real life, cinematic Komitas has to involuntarily become its "victim" once again. ♦

# Komitas and the music of nations

Komitas not only collected, transcribed, researched and compared more than 3000 pieces of Armenian folk music, but also did research on the music of other cultures. We talked to Tatevik Shukhkulyan, head of Research Department of Komitas Museum-Institute about the topic.

TEXT : HASMIK BARKHUDARYAN / PHOTO : KOMITAS MUSEUM-INSTITUTE



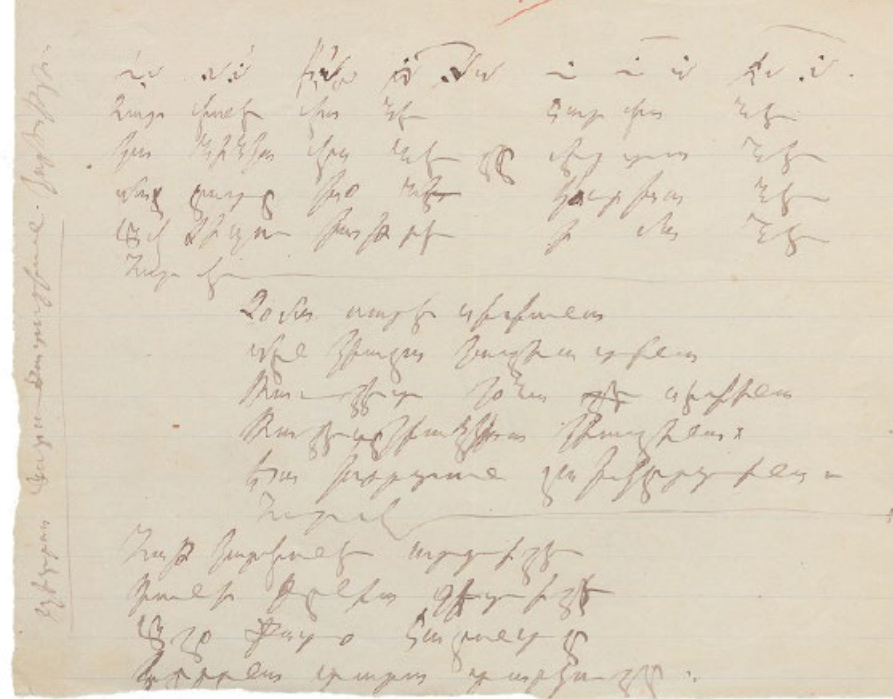
◀  
Turkish song written down by Komitas Vardapet

### THE HARD WORK OF COLLECTING

Komitas collected musical pieces not only from Armenian-inhabited areas, says Tatevik, but from all our neighbors. The goal was one: find out the “defining musical formula” to understand the possible influences the nations had on each other and research Armenian music in the context of the neighboring nations’ music. Komitas also did a huge amount of work collecting, preserving and researching the music of other nations. One must understand, Tatevik continues, that in those days collecting music was much harder than today and it involved a lot of work on site. Komitas would have to travel to different villages, populated by different people, to collect folk songs. The villagers didn’t just sing: one wouldn’t sing a work song, if they weren’t working at that moment. So, he would sit with them, share their work and their songs, or observe them secretly. We know he used both these methods when collecting Armenian folk songs.

### ON CORRELATIONS AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Tatevik says Armenians had many correlations with our neighbors – the Kurds, the Turks, the Arabs and the Persians, and tight links to the Assyrians. At the same time, the Georgian influence was insignificant despite being neighbors and was mostly limited to urban folk. Komitas reflected on the music of all our neighbors – even the Greek music. In terms of collected material accessible to us, we know he recorded Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish and Georgian songs, and even a Finnish song. We also have many facts that he was researching Arabic and Persian music in depth. He read a lecture in Berlin Scharwenka Conservatory and demonstrated in comparison, along with Armenian music, Kurdish, Persian, Arabic and Turkish songs. He would sing a phrase, then reproduce the manner in which it would be sung by a Kurd and then, how it would be sung by a Persian. Sadly, no audio recording of this lecture has been preserved. Through his work, Komitas showed that Armenian music was not a derivative but rather an independent branch: of course there were influences and correlations with neighbors, but the formula and the core of it was our own. Tatevik adds that there was a lot of debate in academic circles on whether Armenian music was independent or derivative of Greco-Byzantine or Persian-Arabic music. In the autumn of 1913, in Constantinople, the newspaper “Azatamart” published a valuable article by Komitas titled “The Armenians have their own music” which put a definitive end to these speculations.



### KURDISH MUSIC

The work on Kurdish music that Komitas has done is a cornerstone. It is even speculated that he did a diploma work for Berlin’s Humboldt University around it, but we have no facts to back it. Among the works he studied were songs of epic proportions – “Layla and Majnun,” “Jambalaya,” “Hamam Ağa,” “Mirza Ağa,” “Mamzi,” “Seyran,” “Leleh Gavreh” and “Jendi Benah Meydaneh”. The Kurdish people see Komitas as the founder of their musicology: they accept the fact that if he didn’t write down their songs, those would not have survived to this day.

### TURKISH MUSIC

There’s controversy surrounding Turkish melodies. One side claims those are Turkish, and specialists on the other side claim they are Armenian, but in Turkish language. We know there were many regions in the Ottoman Empire where the whole populace talked Turkish, like the very town – Kütahya – that Komitas was born in. Despite claims that the Armenian language was banned there, we know that Komitas frequented an Armenian Sunday school. So, there is controversy around the origins of those songs – whether Turkish or Armenian, but Tatevik thinks they are too different stylistically to be Armenian. She also says those songs are beautiful, rich in melody and thematic content. The Kurdish and Turkish songs gathered and written down by Komitas are in the 14th volume of his published works. Turkish authorities had big plans about Komitas, wanting him to found a conservatory and research Turkish music. And vardapet would have done that, it was what he loved after all. But then, 1915 changed it all. ▶

▲  
Kurdish song  
written down by  
Komitas Vardapet

Later, Turkish authorities tried to replace Komitas with the great Hungarian composer Bela Bartok, who had done the same work for his region that Komitas did for Armenians and the neighboring nations. It is known that Bartok was shown the recordings of 130 songs. He agreed to notate the songs, but he couldn't understand the words. For some reason local specialists didn't help him either, which gives us reason to think those were Armenian songs, and the government did not want to admit it. In any case, we don't have enough information to draw a conclusion on this.

### PERSIAN AND ARABIC MUSIC

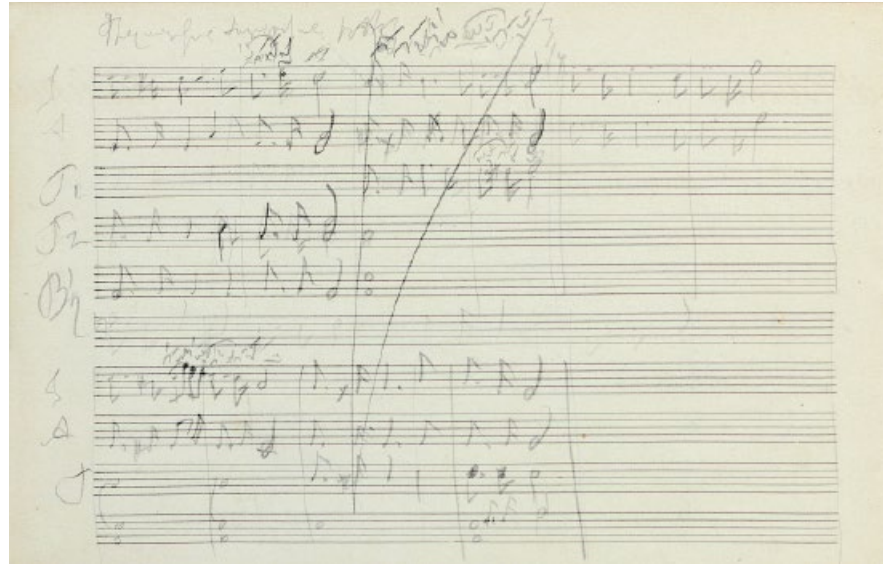
Komitas has – aside from collected material – scientific research where he reflects on the music of different nations; in particular, the Persian manner, e.g. the nasal singing, that is often used today in Armenian “rabiz” music. He spoke favorably of the Persian manner of singing. In the same way, Komitas showed in diagrams how the modes in Armenian music relate to Persian music. For example, Armenian medieval music is based on the so-called eight-mode system. Each mode has its formula. Komitas showed how the Armenian eight-mode could be compared with Arabic and Greek music.

### EUROPEAN MUSIC

While researching Armenian music, Komitas often referred to European music. The reasoning behind this was that most of the scientific society had European education and were well versed in European culture, also it was easier to demonstrate the Armenian in relation to the European: in structure, notation and the logic of the structure of music, and so on. Music has its own math. He showed that math through comparison. Interestingly enough, Komitas was interested in every nation's folklore. He even reflected on Finnish folk music, writing down one song – a single sample, but he also discusses it in his scientific research. The song he transcribed is preserved in the archive – it's not well-known these days, but maybe it was when Komitas was around. We, sadly, don't know much more.

### MUSIC OF THE TRIBES

Komitas had extensive education which allowed him to research ancient music – from the origins of humankind. He would study the music of primitive tribes and draw conclusions on how music itself developed, not just the Armenian one. We see this kind of ideas in the works of musicologist Kurt Sacks. So, perhaps he gained this approach during his university years. Komitas called it



“Music in ancient centuries – among the ancient savages and of current times”. He researched the tribes of Polynesian isles. How musical expression starts with two sounds, repeated and modulated, and then two sounds become three, then four. Komitas theorized, Tatevik says, that music in general developed like this.

^  
Finnish song  
written down by  
Komitas Vardapet

### INDIA AND CHINA

Tatevik speaks of the interest Komitas had for Eastern music – especially the Indian and Chinese music – what it was, how it was written down, and their own notation. We know that Armenians in Medieval times had their own neum notation called khaz, and our new notation was founded later – in the 19th century, and he knew these methods of notation were different from European 5-line notation. The medieval methods of notation were quite different – hieroglyphic, in fact, and a single sign could contain a huge amount of information. The Chinese people had their own notation too, as did the Indian people. Komitas showed how one system could be translated into the other in relation to the Armenian notation. These works are not in a complete state, being mostly in the draft stage. But his main goal was not drawing comparisons to the Armenian system, but the research of other systems in itself.

### ASSYRIAN MUSIC

We don't have the main body of research Komitas did on Assyrian music and how it compares to its Armenian counterpart. We know that during celebrating the 25th anniversary of Gevorgyan seminary, Komitas read a lecture on the comparisons of Armenian and Assyrian music, which shows that such a body of research exists. ♦



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# LIMONJIAN AND THE FOUNDING OF ARMENIAN NEW NOTATION SYSTEM

In the beginning of the 19th century, a big part of Armenian medieval professional music was on the verge of being forgotten. As a result of closed-door policy adopted centuries ago, the system of the Armenian khaz notation became incomprehensible to church musicians.

It is in this decisive moment when the great reformist Hampartsoum Limonjian started his activity as a musicologist. Baba Hampartsoum would later become the person who would save the enormous amount of Armenian musical heritage. Decades later, Komitas would continue this mission.

TEXT : LOOSINEH VOSKANYAN, LILIT HARUTYUNYAN

## A BRILLIANT SOLUTION TO A HOPELESS SITUATION

Composer and musician Hampartsoum Limondjian was born in 1768 in Constantinople. The most important part of his career is considered musicology. Limonjian was very concerned about the fact that Armenian music had started to get heavily influenced by the cultures of neighboring nations.

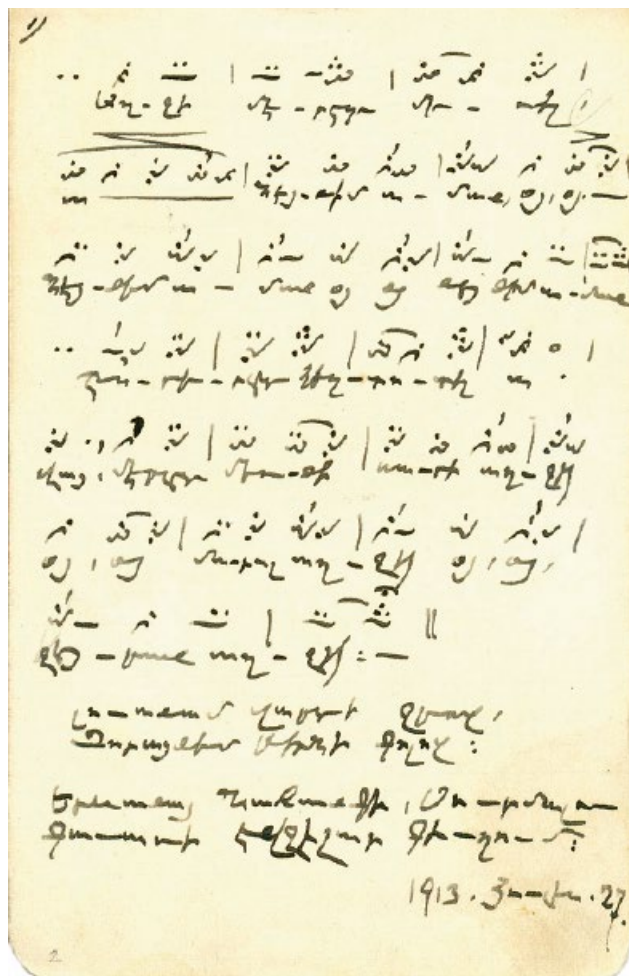
He noticed that in order to please rich people, some priests added oriental aesthetics to the songs and changed them, thereby losing the true features and purity of Armenian music. It is noteworthy that hymns (sharakan), chants (tagh) and other genres of Armenian sacred music are quite complex and require certain skills and professional approach from the performer, also, the original structure created by the authors has to be maintained in every possible way. It was here that Limonjian faced a problem: at that time, nobody was able to transcribe music with Armenian medieval notation system. The musicians and the clergy transmitted all of the spiritual songs by oral tradition. Limonjian made a conclusion: he would create a new system that would preserve church music in its original state.

The solution of the problem lied in the nature of Western Armenian culture. Western Armenia was at the crossroads of the West and East and was influenced by both cultures. Limonjian had studied Armenian and Eastern music, including Arabic, Turkish, and European, for many years. As a result, he did not simply just use European notes to put down Armenian music. Thus, he made an extraordinary move for those years, which still surprises some historians. Based on 7 khaz images, as well as on the sequence of European notation, Limonjian created a very complex, but actually a simple and livable system. It was also neumatic and was not applied to the European 5-line bar system, so it was easier to transcribe the music even if one had just a sheet of paper and a pencil. First of all, Limonjian's system was convenient for putting down monodic music and it is known that originally Armenian music used only one voice. Moreover, the System allowed to transcribe the special microtonal features of Armenian melodies, which are completely different from the European ones.



^ Mysterious Armenian khazes

^ Limonjian's system, used by Komitas, 1913



However, the creation of a new notation system was only the first step. The long phase of transcribing thousands of pieces of folk and spiritual music would begin later.

### LIMONJIAN'S SYSTEM IN ACTION

The 19th century was a time for awakening the appreciation of national identity in many countries. In Armenia, too, the era of re-evaluation of national culture had begun. Many intellectuals, including Grigor Gabasagalyan, Hampartsoum Limonjian and others, understood that Armenian sacred culture was in a very difficult state. There was a need for refreshment, modernization since everything was in danger of being forgotten. Oral tradition of preserving songs was not a reliable way of protecting them.

Limonjian and his students implemented an unprecedented project. They once again put Armenian hymns on paper. However, the significant event took place in Eastern Armenia. Catholicos of All Armenians Gevorg IV invited Nikolaios Tashchyan, a student of Limonjian, from Constantinople to the spiritual center of Etjmiatsin.

He instructed Tashchian to record the entire musical legacy of Armenian Church. The Catholicos himself participated in the process: he sang hymns, while Tashchyan and others wrote them down.

This was how thousands of pieces of Armenian music have been preserved so far. In addition, the division was done according to genres – sharakans, chants, melodies, and the Divine Liturgy. In total, ritual manuscripts cover 2-3,000 pages. They allow us to understand how this or that song was sung in the 19th century. In addition to spiritual music, the earliest samples of folk music have reached to modern times due to Limonjian's notation.

Thanks to Limonjian's system, almost everything was possible with a few tools. Musicologists traveled village by village, having only blank sheets of paper, and transcribed each melody that they found. Komitas was one of these people. It was only in 1917 when Spiridon Melikyan, a student of Komitas, started recording music with a phonograph. Komitas did most of his work with the Armenian new notation system. Of course, he was familiar with the European notation system. However, even in his later life, when he was writing a Theory of European music, he used to show the terms in Armenian notation.

Hambardzum Limonjian died in 1839. His lifetime did not coincide with the brutal repression and persecution of the last years of the Ottoman Empire. He was a respected figure even in the Turkish environment and had many students among Turks. Limonjian's hymns are still performed in the monastery of the Mekhitarist Congregation both in Venice and in Vienna. However, the greatest achievement of Baba Hambartsoum was the founding of Armenian new notation system. It was a key to saving a tremendous amount of music. Moreover, it paved the way for the development of Armenian professional music and the integration of European notation system. ♦

# KOMITAS:

## An Armenian Voice in the World Symphony

Komitas is arguably the most Armenian composer, whose prolific activities have affected a scope well beyond music or musicology. Komitas is a symbol of a whole epoch and his tragic end fully symbolizes the ordeals, that the Armenian nation went through in the beginning of the 20th century. Historian Tigran Zakaryan describes what was going on in the World and in the region during his life.

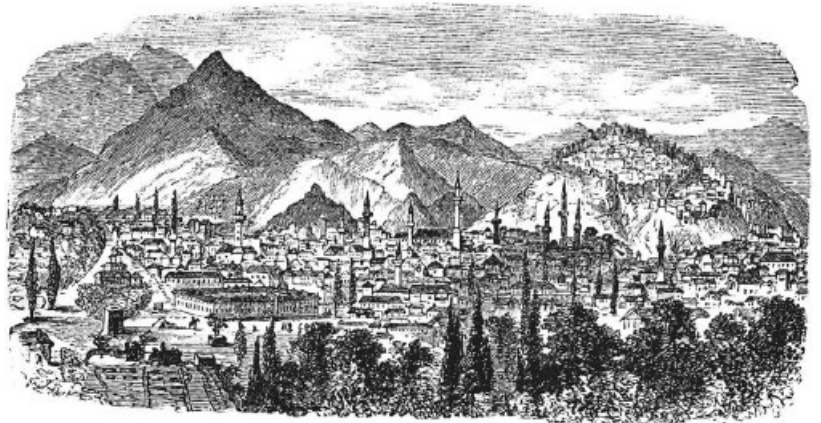
TEXT : TIGRAN ZAKARYAN



The founder of the Armenian school of music started his life in the Ottoman Empire in decline and struggling to retain its territorial integrity, while he finished it in a quite different world, where former Ottoman and Russian empires were substituted by the Republic of Turkey and the USSR and where the term “Armenian Question” was gradually plunging into oblivion. Komitas, whose baptismal name was Soghmon Soghomonyan, was born in Kütahya (Kutina in Armenian), in western Asia Minor in 1869. Once a vibrant center of burgeoning ceramic industry, with its renowned Armenian masters, the city was also marked by its routine discrimination against local Armenians, which included a ban on using Armenian language in everyday conversation. This is why in his childhood Soghomon spoke Turkish rather than Armenian.

It was so even at the age of 12 when he, after losing both of his parents, was taken to Etchmiadzin by the local Armenian bishop Kevork Vartabed Tertsagyan. When Catholicos Gevorg IV felt uneasy upon hearing in a meeting that the boy spoke only Turkish, he warned Soghomon that the education in the Gevorgyan Seminary in Etchmiadzin is in Armenian and he had to be fluent in his mother tongue. The boy answered with full straightforwardness: “I came here to learn Armenian, Your Holiness.”

↓  
 Catholicos Kevork V of Armenia



**UNDER SULTAN ABDÜLAZİZ THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE WAS UNDERGOING TANZIMAT – A PERIOD OF SOCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REFORMS**

This sincerity touched the Catholicos, who decided that the boy from Kutina, gifted with such a superb voice deserved enrollment into the most prestigious Armenian educational institution. Soon he mastered Armenian to perfection, including various dialects; he was to decode and understand another, a more sophisticated language of Armenians, which is the national music.



←  
 Komitas Vardapet,  
 1910's

**END OF A BELLE ÉPOQUE**

The Ottoman Empire across which young Soghomon and the Bishop of Kütahya travelled in 1881 was rather different from that of 1869. Under Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-1876), during whose reign Komitas was born, the Ottoman Empire was undergoing Tanzimat – a period of social, administrative, military, economic and political reforms, initiated in 1837. Triggered by the disastrous Greek War of Independence (1822-1832), those reforms' main driving force was the urgent need to avert the empire's possible disintegration. The so-called religious community or millet system which over centuries enabled Christian communities of the empire to enjoy a certain degree of internal autonomy and which



^ Holy Echmiadzin, early 1900's



< Greek lithograph celebrating the Ottoman Constitution

< Kutahya, birthplace of Komitas, vintage engraving



> Constantinople, late 19th century

was idealized by some modern scholars as an Ottoman-style belle époque was giving way to a new period full of challenges and perils. Some reformers were ready to go so far as to consider granting the non-Muslim communities equal rights with the Muslims, however the fierce opposition by a majority of the Ottoman elite to such a move blocked all prospects of such an eventuality. Since the beginning of the 19th century, Christian communities of the empire – inspired by the cultural and intellectual revival they experienced – started to claim their own statehood or autonomy. Those demands were also supported by some Great Powers, who used them as leverage against the Ottoman authorities. Given the fact that the Christians constituted about half of

the population of the empire by mid 19th century, this was too bitter a pill to swallow for the Sublime Porte. Nevertheless, in 1876, under the new sultan Abdul Hamid (1876-1909) an Ottoman constitution was promulgated, which however was soon abrogated in wake of a humiliating defeat in the war with Russia (1877-1878). By the peace treaty signed in San Stefano, an outskirts of Constantinople, the Ottoman Empire ceded large swathes of territories to the newly emerging Balkan nations and to Russia in Western Armenia. Yet European Great Powers intervened against what could be Russia's disproportionate influence over Ottoman affairs and forced a new treaty in Berlin, with less painful conditions for the Sublime Porte. >

Both treaties also touched on the situation of Armenians in the empire, hence coined in international affairs as “Armenian Question”. While the Treaty of San Stefano stipulated a transfer of Western Armenian provinces of Kars and Erzerum/Karin from the Ottoman Empire to Russia and local reform in Western Armenia under St. Petersburg’s supervision, the Berlin Treaty confined Russia’s territorial gains in Armenia to Kars district alone and placed the responsibility for the vaguely termed “reforms based on local needs” on the six Great Powers – Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary and Russia. The last point, as it turned out soon afterwards, provided ample room for a diplomatic gamble, in which “the Sick Man of Europe” – a metaphor used for the Ottoman Empire – managed to capitalize on those very Great Powers’ internal disagreements and clash of interests, ultimately aborting all reform projects. Moreover, what the “Red Sultan” had in mind about the Armenian Question was anything but reform; namely it was bloody repression and terror, which were unleashed upon Armenians in mid 1890’s culminating in 1894-1896.

**THE “LOVE-SINGING” VARDAPET**

With his unique musical talents, Soghomon soon learned the bases of Armenian musical traditions and upon completing his studies in the seminary, he became a music teacher in 1893 and was appointed the choirmaster of the Etchmiadzin Cathedral. In 1894, Soghomon became hieromonk and was given the name of the 7th-century poet and musician Catholicos Komitas. In February 1895,



Maps of San Stefano and Berlin congresses, 1878



Istanbul in 1920's

he was ordained vardapet (celibate priest) and became thereafter known as Komitas Vardapet. Komitas had a solid musical education, as much as conditions in Armenia could afford it. An earliest major influence for Komitas was composer Kristapor Kara-Murza, who taught at the seminary only one year, in 1892. Although Komitas later criticized his works as not authentically Armenian, Kara-Murza was the person who taught Komitas the polyphonic choral structure, which became a characteristic trait of Komitas’s musical arrangements. Yet his soul belonged to the folk music, the one that was sung by a humble Armenian ploughman and a reaper, by a woman baking bread or singing a lullaby to her child, songs of joy and sadness, anguish and hope and everything else that a human can experience. His interest drove him to collect and transcribe those melodies into notes, spending days and hours with peasants.

Sultan Abdülhamid II of Turkey

In 1895, his first collection of transcribed folk music, "The Songs of Agn" (Shar Akna zhoghvrdakan yergeri), was completed, which included 25 pieces of love songs, wedding tunes, lullabies and dances. It was disapproved by an ultraconservative faction of the Etchmiadzin clergy, who harassed and sarcastically referred to Komitas as "the love-singing priest."

Komitas was much more than a mere transcriber and compiler of folk tunes: he was a person who created music. Early in his career, in the first half of 1890's he wrote several pieces for the poems of Khachatur Abovian, Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, Avetik Isahakyan (then his younger classmate) and others. In 1891, the Holy See's official newspaper Ararat magazine published his "National Anthem" (Azgayin orhnerg, lyrics by seminary student A. Tashjian) for polyphonic choirs.



## **K**OMITAS WAS MUCH MORE THAN A MERE TRANSCRIBER AND COMPILER OF FOLK TUNES: HE WAS ALSO A PERSON WHO CREATED MUSIC

### ZULUM

The term zulum – in Ottoman Turkish meaning terror or tyranny – came to describe the reign of Abdul Hamid by his contemporaries. Responding to demands of various minority groups by massacres was business as usual for the Ottoman authorities, however what befell Armenians in mid-1890's was unprecedented even by Ottoman standards, costing some 200,000 to 300,000 Armenian lives and forcing a similar number to move to the Caucasus under the Russian Empire or to convert to Islam. Abdul Hamid was a guileful enough politician to use local Kurdish tribal leaders in his dirty business, thus making sure that Kurds and Armenians will not forge an alliance against his rule. Pan-Islamism was elevated to the level of state ideology in the Ottoman Empire, and it was instrumentalized for the massacres, inciting Muslim fanaticism against Christians.

Although the "Civilized World's" progressive society was outraged at and outspoken on those actions, little, if anything, was done by their governments to stop the violence. Russia, who was engaged in a program of russifying its own minorities – including suppression of Armenian educational and religious institutions – also became an unexpected ally to the Sublime Porte in its fight against Armenian

"revolutionaries", i.e. champions of armed resistance against Ottoman authorities. The movement of Armenian "revolutionaries" popularly dubbed as "hayduks" or "fidayis" had started from 1880's, however it became more organized with the onset of two most powerful political parties, the Social-Democrat Hinchakyan Party (SDHP) and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF-Dashnaksutyun). Both parties, to different degrees, advocated for an autonomous and socialist Armenia in the Ottoman Empire. For the aim of overthrowing the sultan both parties established contacts with various Europe-based Turkish opposition groups, collectively known as "Young Turks"; yet those groups were strongly opposed to granting autonomy to Armenians.

The Young Turk movement was an expression of somewhat belated Turkish nationalism. The reason for this was that under the ideology of Islam – the backbone of the Ottoman Empire – there were no separate Muslim nations and the very notion of Turkishness for the Ottoman elite, coming from various ethnic backgrounds, was alien and even despised. The Young Turks, whose leading faction in the early 1900's became the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) aimed at maintaining the empire through modernizing reforms.

The time for them to act came in 1908 when the sultan, pressured hard by Russia, Austria-Hungary and some other Great Powers was about to agree on conducting reforms in the Balkan Provinces of the empire – something that was viewed as an imminent threat to the European possessions of the Ottoman Empire. >

## KOMITAS FERVENTLY ASSERTED THAT ALBEIT ARMENIAN MUSIC HAD AFFINITIES WITH OTHER EASTERN MUSICAL TRADITIONS, STILL HAD A UNIQUE CHARACTER

In July 1908 under the pressure of an army, which was in open revolt against Abdul-Hamid II, the 34th sultan agreed to restore the constitution suspended in 1878.

The jubilant crowds cheered the new constitutional era as Armenian politicians viewed this as a promise that the old days of zulum are over and bygone.

### RECLAIMING ARMENIAN MUSIC

In October 1895 Komitas left Etchmiadzin for Tiflis. There he studied harmony till 1896 under composer Makar Yekmalyan, whose polyphonic rendering of Armenian liturgy then was the most popular and who became one of his most influential teachers. Soon, when Komitas had mastered the principles of the European music, at the behest of Catholicos Mkrtych Khrimyan (Khrimyan Hayrik) Armenian oil tycoon Alexander Mantashev agreed to pay 1,800 rubles for his three-year tuition in Germany.

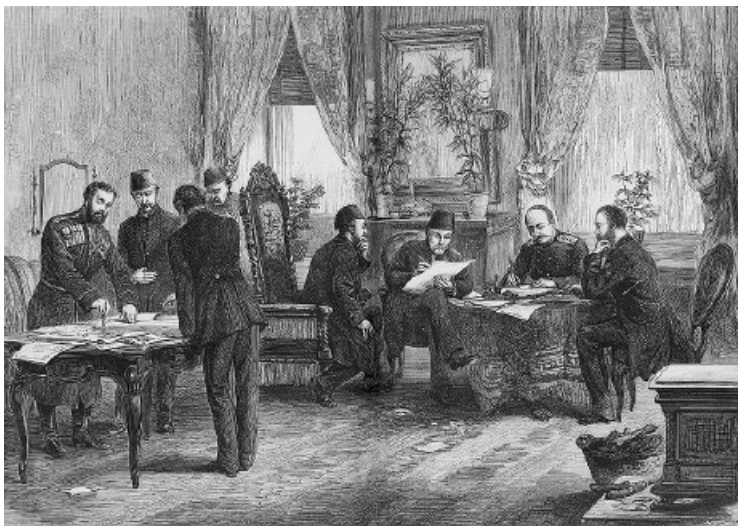
Then the youngest emerging European power, Germany, after its unification in 1871, took a deep interest in its own cultural roots as well as those of the others, including Oriental nations, to which Armenians then were considered to belong to, so Komitas found Germany as an interesting place not only to study but also to introduce Armenian musical culture to the European society.

➤ Catholicos Khrimyan Hayrik, painting by Ivan Aivazovsky



He initially took private lessons with professor Richard Schmidt for a few months. Afterwards, he was accepted into the prestigious Frederick William University (currently Humboldt University). Komitas suffered financial problems, however, this did not distract him from education and he effectively absorbed the erudition of highly accomplished German teachers, among whom were renowned folk music specialists Heinrich Bellermann, Max Friedlander, Oskar Fleischer and others. In May 1899 Fleischer established the Berlin chapter of the International Musical Society, of which Komitas became an active member. He lectured there on Armenian folk music suggesting that it dated back to pre-Christian times. After finishing his studies in Germany in July 1899, Komitas returned to Etchmiadzin.

▼ Treaty of San Stefano



Upon his return to Etchmiadzin in September 1899, Komitas resumed teaching and composing. He assembled and trained a large polyphonic choir based on his acquired knowledge. Until 1906, he directed the Gevorgian Seminary choir. It was in this period when he completed most of the theoretical and research papers that earned him his place among the pioneers of ethnomusicology. Komitas spent summers in Armenian countryside, developing a unique relationship with villagers. He thus took the scholarly task of transcribing and preserving rural Armenian songs. In the fall of 1903 after three years of compilation and transcription, Komitas published a collection of 50 folks songs titled "One Thousand and One Songs." Renowned linguist, philologist and philosopher Manuk Abeghyan helped him greatly to compile the folk pieces.

The same collection was reprinted in 1904, while in 1905 a further 50 songs were published. Komitas was a most devout popularizer of Armenian folk music not only for foreigners, but also for the Armenian urban population, who, living in multi-ethnic environments, were too much exposed to musical traditions of other nations and had largely lost links with the authentic Armenian music. Since early 1900's Komitas with his choir launched a series of tours not only across the cities of Caucasus, but also in Europe, staging folk music with his arrangements and in the meantime delivering lectures. One of such concerts was held on 22 February 1908 in Yerevan in the Janpoladyan Theatre building (later known in the Soviet period as the House of the Officers).

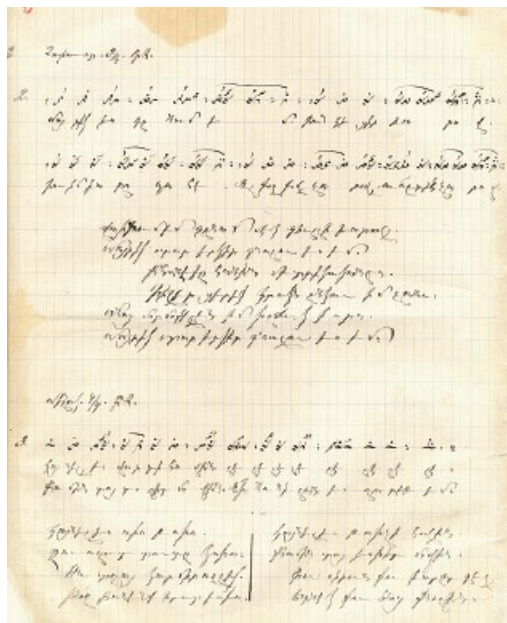
Komitas was also listened to and praised by leading non-Armenian musicians of his period, including, for instance, French composer Claude Debussy, musicologist Louis Laloy, writer Romain Rolland and others.

Komitas fervently asserted that albeit Armenian music had affinities with other Eastern musical traditions, still had a unique character and on that grounds he clashed with other Armenian musicians criticizing them of either undue "Europeanization" or "Easternization" of the Armenian music. All his devotion to the purity of the Armenian music notwithstanding, Komitas took interest in folk music of neighboring nations as well. He became a pioneer in compiling Kurdish folk music, publishing in December 1903 (1904 January New Style) a collection of 12 music pieces, entitled in French "Chansons kurdes transcrites par le père Komitas" (Kurdish songs transcribed by Father Komitas). He moved to Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1910, two years after the revolution in the Ottoman Empire. Some note that among the reasons for his decision to leave Etchmiadzin was constant harassment on the part of conservative clergy, preoccupied with Komitas's innovations, such as, for instance, recording spiritual music on a new device called gramophone.

There he founded the Gusan choir (Hay gusan since 1912), made up of tens of musicians. He taught musicology to a number of future musicians and composers, including Barsegh Kanachyan, the author of the present Armenian national anthem. Komitas also trained a group of students in Armenian melody and formed a choir that toured different Armenian cities of the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, giving performances of the folk compositions that he had arranged for four-part choir. Komitas was so much immersed in Armenian folk



▲ Pre-communist era Yerevan



▲ One of the folk songs, written down by Komitas

music that he created several songs in folk fashion, later popularly believed to be genuine folk music. His stay in Constantinople was quite a prolific period, however it came to an abrupt end, just as the lives of a million and a half Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

### THE CALAMITY

The Young Turk revolution fell short of its main objective – to save the unity of the empire. In the following five years the empire lost almost all of its African and European possessions to Italy and the young Balkan nations, respectively, while the Armenian reform issue resurged again in 1912. ➤

Bloody massacres in the Cilician town of Adana and adjacent areas in 1909, that the Young Turk leaders tried to ascribe to “counter-revolutionary elements”, dashed Armenians’ initial hopes for a safe and liberal Ottoman homeland. After long negotiations and setbacks, under the pressure of Russia and Great Britain, a deal on reforms, guaranteeing safety of Armenians and others in the eastern vilayets of the Ottoman Empire, was struck in early 1914. However it was not destined to be implemented due to the onset of the World War one, which brought about a major calamity upon Armenians, namely the genocide. After the colossal territorial losses the leading Union and Progress party promoted a racial and ideology of Pan-Turkism, advocating for turning the multiethnic empire into a Turkish national state that was to expand eastwards to include other Turkic-speaking entities. This ideology left no room for an Armenian homeland, which was an ethnic barrier between the Turks in Anatolia and those in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

On 24 April 1915, the day, which is currently being marked as the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, Komitas was arrested like hundreds of Armenian notables in Constantinople. Along with others, he was put on a train and sent to the city of Çankırı in Central Anatolia. U.S. ambassador Henry Morgenthau (mainly through the efforts of his Armenian legal advisor, Arshag Schmavonian) and other influential foreign representatives intervened with the government in favor of the celebrity musician, and the government ultimately decided to avoid too much publicity over the issue and sent him back.

It would be surprising to note that among those who petitioned on behalf of Komitas were two prominent figures of Pan-Turkism, poet Mehmet Emin Yurdakul and nationalist woman writer Halide Edip. Both were personally on good terms with Vardapet and accepted him as a person, yet some of Halide Edip’s writings reveal her genuine hostility towards his Armenian background. She described Komitas and his music as “Anatolian” instead of Armenian, believing that his songs were “simply turned the words into Armenian”. Edip even believed that his parents were “probably of Turkish descent” and that “he was an Armenian nationalist whether his origin was Turkish or Armenian, but in temperament and heart he was a real Anatolian Turk if unconsciously.” Edip, who later was notorious of collecting Armenian orphans of genocide and raising them up as exemplary Turks, of course would have preferred



^  
 Armenian refugee camp, 1915

Komitas were a Turk and could not understand the broadness of his vision for accepting other cultures and musical traditions, including Turkish.

**AGONY AND AFTERLIFE**

Komitas returned from his exile shattered. The deeply traumatic experience during the seemingly brief exile put unhealable scars on his psyche. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – this is how modern specialists in psychiatry diagnose his mental disorder, the symptoms of which appeared in his conduct in exile.

In the autumn of 1916, Komitas was taken to a hospital in Constantinople, Hôpital de la paix, and then he moved to Paris in 1919. Unlike common perception, Komitas at times spoke and behaved as a completely reasoning person being consistent in his ideas on Armenia and Armenian music. Painter Panos Terlemezyan in his memoirs described a visit to Komitas in Paris in March 1921.





> A Vile Jouife hospital in Paris, where Komitas spent his last days



## UNLIKE COMMON PERCEPTION, KOMITAS AT TIMES SPOKE AND BEHAVED AS A COMPLETELY REASONING PERSON BEING CONSISTENT IN HIS IDEAS ON ARMENIA AND ARMENIAN MUSIC

During the visit, Vradapet, when asked if he preferred Armenian music to the European, replied: "Why do you want the taste of an apricot when you eat a peach? Each one of them has its own meaning." Then the Father of the Armenian folk music added: "Let my people stay well; I shall not feel cold in their heart. To me there is no heaven higher than the soul of my own people."

The earthly existence of Komitas, after a protracted agony, came to an end in 1935 in the mental hospital in Villejuif in Paris. A year later the ashes of the great composer were transferred to Soviet Armenia. Yeghishe Charents, a most renowned eastern Armenian poet of 1920's and 1930's, who fell victim to Stalinist terror, according to his contemporaries, was devastated and deeply emotional, yet inspired with a glimmer of hope by seeing Komitas's ashes at a mourning ceremony in Yerevan. The poet, who shortly afterwards had to face his own tragic arrest and death, wrote on this occasion a long poem, on which he worked for some seven months, entitled "Requiem aeternam" (Eternal Rest).

Komitas found his eternal peace in Yerevan's Pantheon, which bears his name and where most renowned people of Armenia are buried. The State Conservatory of Yerevan, founded in 1923, is named after him since 1946. Numerous memorial statues are dedicated to him, streets in Yerevan and other cities in Armenia are named after him, however Komitas's legacy is far from being fully discovered.

▼ Komitas monument in Vile Jouife hospital, Paris



### KOMITAS'S HEAVEN

Rev. Vramshapuh Kibaryan, the Armenian Church supreme priest of Paris, during his visit to Komitas in his clinic in 1920's recalled a question by the composer: "Tell me, reverend, does the work, for which I died, still survive?"

Unfortunately Komitas's preoccupation was partially grounded. Suffice it to note that from over 3,000 pieces of Armenian folk music that he had collected and transcribed, more than half were subsequently lost and only around 1,200 are now extant. His rich musicological legacy still needs a critical and thorough research. The most precious loss which Armenian and world musicology suffered was that of most of his unpublished manuscripts on cracking the code of the medieval "neume" (in Armenian: khaz), the notation system used for Armenian liturgical chants in the early middle ages. Recently some research has been done in that field, however more needs to be done. Komitas's liturgy, on which he had been meticulously working for years, purifying the music of all extraneous elements, was initially rejected by the Armenian Church authorities. However after its first publication in 1933 in Paris, shortly before his death, the liturgy became a "canonical" one with some of its parts frequently being performed outside of religious context.

Komitas found his heaven in the hearts and souls of the Armenian people. In fact, as many Armenian musicologists say, Komitas's legacy is clearly distinguishable in Armenian classical music of the 20th century.

Komitas spoke an international language, that of the music, without rejecting or dismissing any single musical tradition. Yet he spoke it Armenian way, in a fashion that was comprehensible also to others as well. He was a son of his nation, who presented Armenian music to the world. As Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I (1955-1994) noted: "Just like St. Mesrop bestowed on his nation and the whole world the monument of the Armenian language, Komitas Vardapet dug out, purified and brought to light the pristine source of the Armenian music." ♦

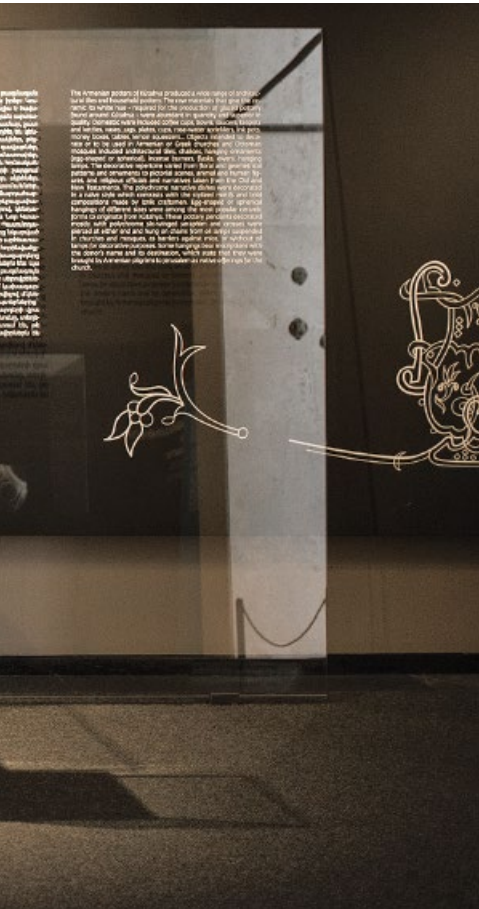
# KUTAHYA'S ART OF EARTH AND FIRE

Located about 300km south-east of Constantinople, on the western side of the Anatolian plateau, a ceramic school flourished from the early sixteenth century to the early twentieth century in the hometown of Komitas Vardapet – Kutahya.



TEXT : NAIRI KHACHADOURIAN  
PHOTO : KOMITAS MUSEUM-INSTITUTE

An Armenian community existed in Kutahya from the thirteenth century and Armenian churches were constructed starting from 1391. Two colophons from fifteenth-century Armenian manuscripts refer to Armenian ceramic craftsmen. The earliest surviving Armenian ceramics from Kutahya are a small monochrome liturgical ewer with an Armenian inscription, made in 1510 in commemoration of Abraham of Kutahya, and a monochrome liturgical jug



made in 1529. Both examples, currently on display at the British Museum in London, testify to the existence of ceramic workshops led by Armenians since the sixteenth century. Through centuries Armenian potters crafted a variety of ceramic ware for various uses, some of which are signed pieces with ligatured monograms or signatures in Armenian, revealing the names of Armenian potters, such as the objects crafted

by Abraham Vardapet. Other objects and tiles, bearing inscriptions display the names of donors, churches, family members, and the dates. Throughout the centuries, Armenian potters pioneered a tradition of provincial and naïve decorative style in the form of pictorial scenes and fancy, colorful figures from daily life and religious themes in the various vessels produced for domestic ware and objects crafted for places of worship. Potters

used a siliceous clay with monochrome and polychrome underpainting and a transparent glaze. Egg-shaped or spherical hangings of different sizes were among the most popular ceramic forms to originate from Kutahya. These pottery pendants decorated mostly with polychrome six-winged seraphim and crosses were pierced at either end and hung on chains from oil lamps suspended in churches and mosques, as barriers against mice, or without





oil lamps for decorative purposes. Some hangings bear inscriptions with the donor's name and its destination, which state that they were brought by Armenian pilgrims to Jerusalem as votive offerings for the church. By the eighteenth century, Armenians controlled the Kutahya ceramic industry. Two court agreements drawn up in Kutahya between the potters of the city and the Ottoman judges Sherif Abdullah and Ahmed Effendi, reveal the names and fathers' names of potters (journeymen and masters) of Kutahya, all of them being Armenians. Three successful workshops were in operation at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, two of them led by Armenian craftsmen: the brothers Garabed and Harutiun Minassian, who directed their workshop together, and David Ohannessian who had established his own workshop in 1907, the Société Ottoman de Faïence. These workshops exported pottery both to the Ottoman world and to Europe, created monumental installations, restored important historical buildings, and participated in various trade shows from 1907 to 1914 in Bursa and outside the Ottoman Empire. David Ohannessian worked in Kutahya until he was exiled during the Armenian Genocide and deported with his family to Syria in 1916. The Minassian brothers were deported to Anatolia and then relocated to Athens. In 1919, David Ohannessian arrived in Jerusalem and was recommended by Colonel Sir Mark Sykes – a British diplomat who had commissioned a work from Ohannessian while serving in Kutahya – to the Pro-Jerusalem Society to create new tiles for the Dome of the Rock. Ohannessian asked to go back to Kutahya to gather materials, tools, and to bring the remaining colleagues back with him. Ohannessian returned to Jerusalem with Nishan Balian and Mgerditch Karakashian. They and their families settled in Jerusalem and the latter two continue to work as ceramic craftsmen to this day. ♦

# KOMITAS INSPIRED CERAMICS

Family Care and Muscari presented the new collection of ceramics called “Komitas.” These unique handmade pieces were created by ceramists from Gyumri’s craft workshop. The idea behind the collection is to reconnect gestures and a genuinely Armenian arts and crafts tradition.

PHOTO : SONA MENTEŞE, MIGIRDIÇ ARZIVYAN



# BACK IN CONSTANTINOPLE

A concert dedicated to the 150th anniversary of Komitas was held in Istanbul. The concert, organized by Anadolu Kültür and Kalan Müzik cultural centers in collaboration with the Maxim Gorki Theater, brought together a number of renowned artists and bands from Turkey, the United States and Armenia.

PHOTO : SONA MENTEŞE, MIGIRDIÇ ARZIVYAN



# 151



Constantijn Lange



Rambalkoshe art union wanted to celebrate the 150 anniversary of both Komitas and Hovhannes Tumanyan, but then the idea came to pay attention on the giants of Armenian culture next year. Started with the poster series created by the members and friends of Rambalkoshe, the project grew bigger and wider. German DJ Constantijn Lange will create a new music based on Komitas's records, which will be played during the exhibition. The later will be mostly based on the relations of Komitas and Tumanyan and rethinking of their heritage for the nation. Event will take place not only in Armenia, but in other countries as well, while Lang's music will also be released on vinyl.



VILYAM KARAPETYAN

MARIA MELIKYAN

SUREN SARGSYAN

DAVIT YUKHANYAN

NONA ISAJANYAN

VAHAN STEPANYAN

AREG BALAYAN

SEDRAK MKRTCHYAN

NARA MURADYAN

HARUTYUN TUMAGHYAN

YEVA MURADYAN

ANI ARAKELYAN

BEN KARAMYAN

AREG MOVSISYAN

VAHAGN HAMALBASHYAN

KHOREN MATEVOSYAN

GAREGIN MARTIROSYAN

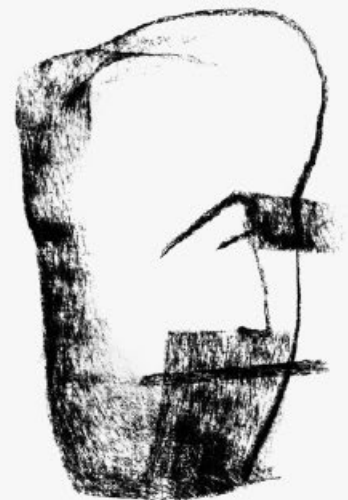
AGATA BADALYAN

LILIT ALTUNYAN

DIANA KUPALYAN

ARA ASLANYAN

ARMINE SHAHBAZIAN



# A FUTURE SHIFT IN ARMENIAN ISRAELI RELATIONS?

With a new Government in Yerevan, the possible end of the Netanyahu era, and the Crisis in Iran, 2019 may spell a new direction for relations between the two nations.

TEXT : EMILIO LUCIANO CRICCHIO



< Demonstration in Jerusalem: Armenians demanding recognition of the Genocide

Since the Armenian Revolution of 2018, analysts have been speculating that Armenia's new Government could take a new stance towards Israel, where relations had seemed to have reached an impasse.

One would expect relations to be warmer considering the many similarities the two nations share. Both nations were born out of Genocide, both Israel and Armenia share borders with hostile and larger Islamic nations. Moreover, the description of both Armenians and Jews as persecuted yet entrepreneurial middle eastern minorities is quite apt.

Armenian foreign minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan even said in 2019: "We identify strongly with the Jewish people, we are very different from our neighbours. We have a long history and have survived many wars and invasions. We know how to adapt to different cultures."

## WHY THE STALEMATE?

With all the similarities, issues remain. Two of the greatest drawbacks for Armenians, are firstly Israel's lucrative energy and arms deals with Azerbaijan. These deals have strengthened the Azeri military and have led to

Israeli weaponry being used against Armenian soldiers in the disputed territory of Nagorno Karabakh. Secondly, Israel's denial of the Armenian Genocide. Many Armenians find Israel's own experience with genocide to be an obvious reason for recognition, yet the Israeli Government persists in its reluctance to use the term "Genocide". Even Israeli President Reuven Rivlin was quoted as saying to Armenian community leaders: "the murder of the members of the Armenian nation cannot be ignored", again stopping short of using the Hebrew word for "Genocide"[1].



^ President Reuven Rivlin meets with representatives of the Armenian community in Jerusalem, 2015



> Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan



< Nikol Pashinyan hosted by Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei in Iran

^ Israeli PM Tamar Zandberg

For Israel, the issue of Armenia's close relations with Iran's distinctly "anti-Israel" Regime are a thorn in relations. Armenia's small land border with Iran provides a much-needed lifeline, with Armenia's southern regions awash with Iranian truckers heading as far as the Black Sea. With tensions on the straits of Hormuz and the lawlessness of Iran's borders with Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Israel sees these trade relations as a great economic boost to Tehran.

**BUT WHY IS THE TIDE TURNING NOW?**

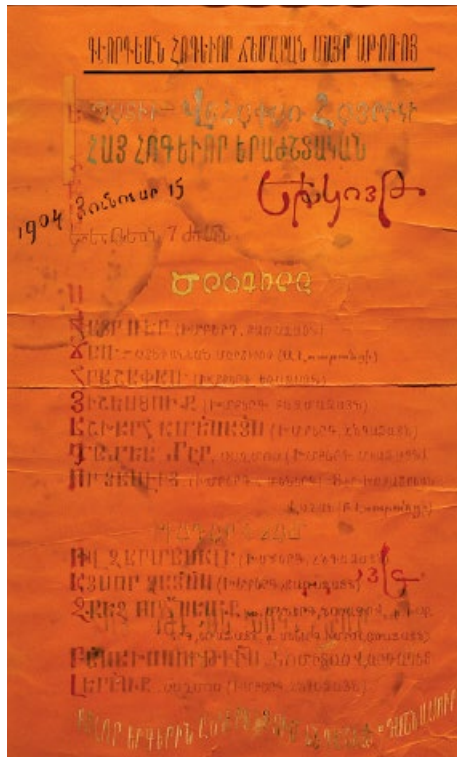
Not only are Israel's relations with Azerbaijan relevant to Armenia but also their relations with Turkey. In recent years, relations with Israel have deteriorated significantly, with Netanyahu and Erdogan even exchanging personal jabs. This a complete turn around from the close alliance Israel shared with Kemalist Turkey right up to the early 2000s. Many analysts saw Tel Aviv's reluctance to embrace the Armenians due to the

security and economic benefits coming from Ankara, which has been openly hostile to Armenia, but this it seems is no more[3]. Furthermore, members of the Knesset, Israel's Parliament, have been flooring motions to recognise the Armenian Genocide. Some political analysts see it as only a matter of time before Israel accepts the Armenian Genocide. This is coupled with a further development. Israel's September election saw Netanyahu's right-wing bloc unable to form a Government, with the task now handed to Benny Gantz's coalition with represents a more liberal sphere of Israeli politics[5]. With a new government in Yerevan, and perhaps soon a new government in Jerusalem, further developments regarding these relations may be on the horizon. The other issue is Iran. Though Armenian PM Pashinyan has dispelled such speculation. Some argue that the future of Armenian-Iranian relations is by all means unpredictable. Iran's economy

is reeling with sanctions, hyperinflation, and recession. The Armenian Government may find that any benefits from close relations with the Iranian Government are diminishing constantly. This is coupled with Israel and the United States seeking to further isolate Iran, this is where trying to gain Armenia's cooperation comes in. For now, Armenian-Iranian relations are non-negotiable according to Pashinyan[6], but who knows when or if this will change. With all the unpredictability around the future in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Israel, Turkey and Iran, it's hard to foresee a thawing of Armenian Israeli relations. However, with Israel's condemnation of Turkey's intervention into Kurdish-held Syria, and the US House of Reps. recognising the Genocide, this is definitely a set of bilateral relations that may well not stay in its stagnant state for much longer, with overtones from both capitals as well as governmental change, analysts will be paying closer attention to these relations. ♦

# POSTERS OF KOMITAS

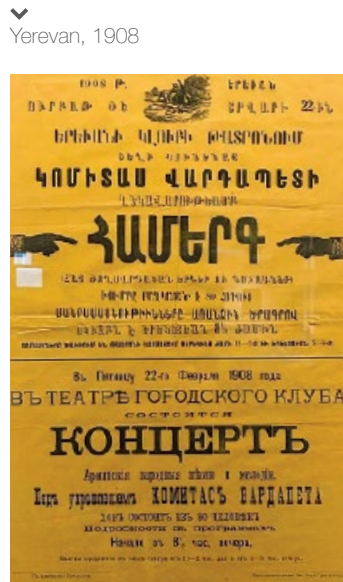
In early 1900's Komitas Vardapet held lots of concerts both in the Caucasus and in Europe. Famously, his only performance in Yerevan took place in 1908 in Janpoladyan's theater, later known as an Officer's house (building was demolished in 2005).



^ Ejiatsin, 1904



^ Ejiatsin, 1904



^ Yerevan, 1908



^ Tiflis (now Tbilisi), 1908

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