September-October, 2012 issue (21)

yerevan

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Anchoring America's Most Polarizing Family

George Deukmejian
Golden State Governor

Jack Bouroudjian
Insights of a Market Veteran

Martiros Saryan
The Artist with Sun on His Palette

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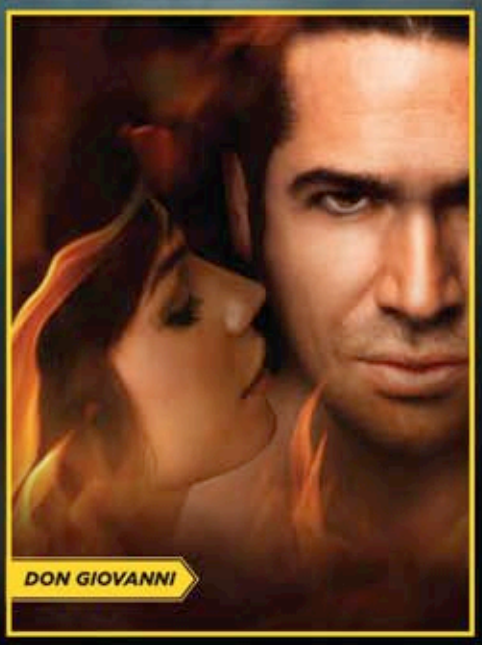

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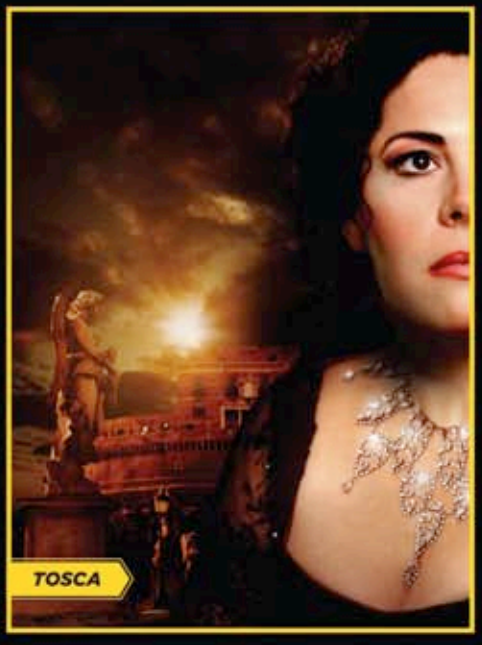

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The Island of Taste
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Khloe Kardahsian talks about the perks and perils of being part of America's most watched family and trying to stay normal in a firestorm of fame, fortune and controversy.

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Armenian TV A Friend or a Culprit?
Three experienced TV insiders cross their swords on issues related to Armenian television.



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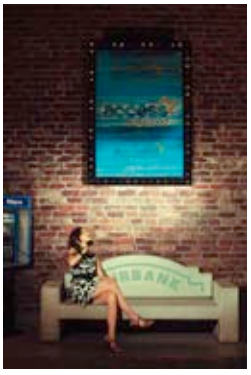

The Best of Both Worlds
Manager of National Sales at NBC Telemundo, Eliz Gazarian-Semerjian and her team support the largest Hispanic television network in the United States.

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A Day in the Life of ...
documentary filmmaker Peter Musurlian is full of interesting encounters and discoveries.





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Career

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ABC News veteran Diane Benneian has worked at the Oscars, Olympics, sports and news for decades. The financial director of West Coast ABC News bureau tells about the TV industry's challenges and gratifications.

Events

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The *Yerevan Magazine* team had a busy summer sponsoring, attending and hosting a slew of events. Revisit the glamorous and star-studded nights.

London Games

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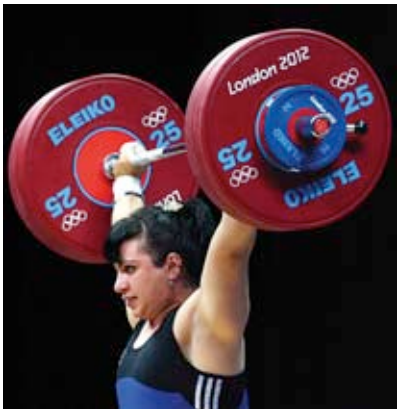
2012 Olympics Inspire a Generation

Revisit the performance of Armenian athletes and coaches at the Games of the XXX Olympiad.



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The Coach's Clinic

Ronda Rousey and Manny Gamburyan have taken their talents to mastermind coach Edmond Tarverdyan, who has quickly become the go-to trainer in MMA and boxing for championships and stardom.

Debut

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The 23-year-old music video director, who started out with nothing more than a dream, now directs music videos for well-known artists that include 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg and T.I.

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The Met's New Star

A young and handsome baritone, Rodion Pogossov delivers sold-out performances at the Metropolitan Opera.



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Dressing stars and socialites alike, Aida Gharakani sticks to classic silhouettes with her successful evening wear company Nicole Bakti.

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Recipe For Delicious Success
Explore the intricacies of the Armenian cuisine with Zov Karamardian.

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Distorted Canvas
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A Different Breed of Charm
Felix Ryan is a young actor who is ready for a stronghold on the industry with his charm and grit.

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The Man Behind the Music
Michael Omartian's success seen through four decades of music.



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Where Pit Smarts Meet Street Smarts
With over 25 years of trading and investing experience, Jack Bouroudjian has traded and seen it all.

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The Sun Worshipper
Martiros Saryan's work defines the sense of beauty for generations.

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Hovering Over Purling Water
Visit the picturesque and historic town of Ashtarak.

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Governor for the People
George Deukmejian has a humble and kind-hearted nature, as discovered by Sauline Kojababian.



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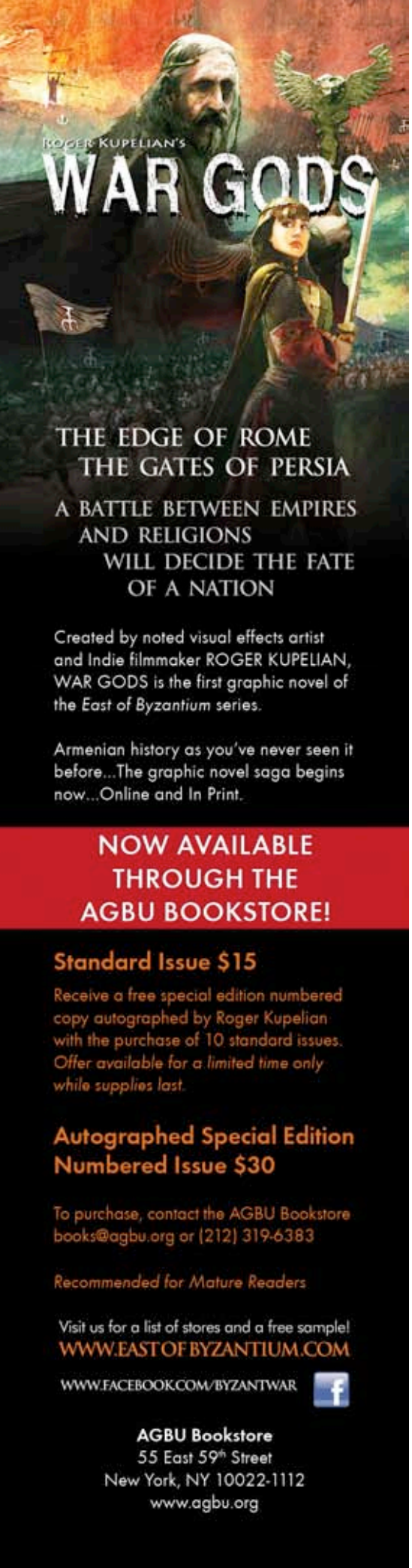

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Images from the archives of: Aurora Publishing House, 1984, Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Zaven Khachikyan, George Deukmejian, Nicole Bakti, Michael Omartian, Zov Karamardian, Alex Nazari, Kaloust Guedel, Khloe Kardashian, Museum of Martiros Saryan, Metropolitan Opera and family archives

Illustration: VAHRAM MURADYAN

Fonts from ParaType Company

The following fonts were used: PF Centro Sans Pro, PF Centro Serif Pro, PF Centro Slab Pro
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The print in the "Alphabet" content includes the font "Noah" by Manvel Shmavonian

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The magazine is registered with the NSDP Library of Congress National Serials Data Program
ISSN 1993-3387 Dated 07/01/2008

The issue has been submitted to printing on August 21, 2012.

Printed in the USA: Trend Offset Printing, Inc 3701 Catalina St. Los Alamitos, CA 90720

Price $6.99 Readership 50,000

The editorial office is not responsible for the content of advertising materials.

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A MAGAZINE WITH AN ACCENT

Plasma, Plasma on the Wall...

A friend said to me over coffee last week, "Those who were scolded by their parents for watching TV and not reading books, now scold their children for playing video games and not watching TV." She reflected much of today's changing reality of the TV industry. Let's face it – television programs are viewed predominantly by the parents of Globalized Internet Citizens. The new generation of viewers' attention is geared toward Internet portals with their vast archives of TV programming. Websites allow the viewers to choose when, what and for how long to watch the program. In turn, this eliminates the possibility of imposing advertisements on the attention of the viewer – we can simply skip them, unless they are funny, provocative and interesting for their own sake, as any art form should be. Turning away from program schedules has forced the advertising and sales departments of TV networks and the corporate advertisers to come up with new ways of selling commercials to cover the high costs of programming.

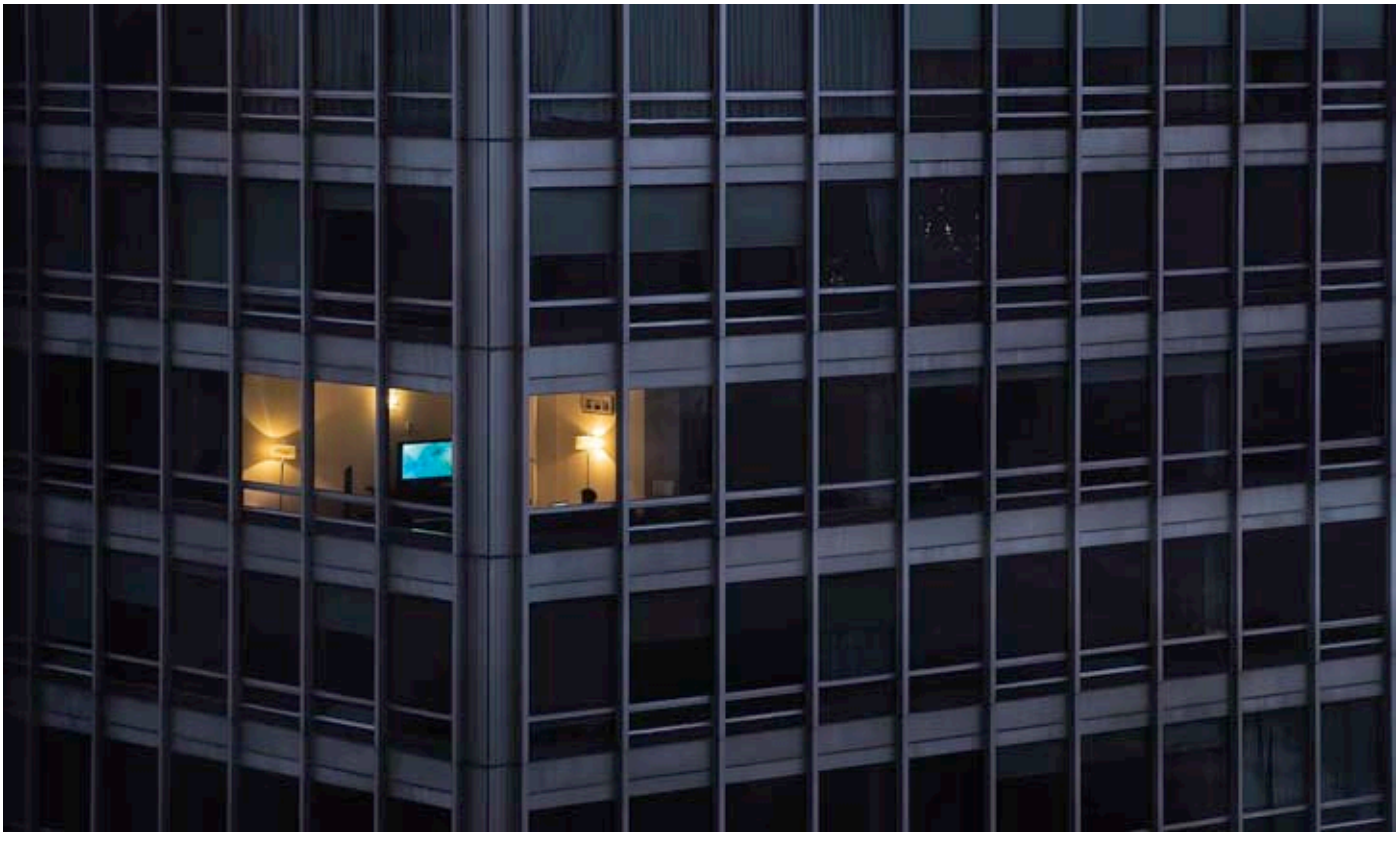
TV programming is also changing rapidly. Having a database of the viewers' preferences, based not only on the ratings of the live streaming but also on the number of Internet downloads, TV networks build their content accordingly. We have only ourselves to blame for the superficiality and vulgarity of some of the shows currently on offer.

We are simply being fed what we have chosen. Television is only a mirror of the individual viewer's mind. It complements one's lack of friendships, romance, and family relationship or anything else we long for. The la-la land of scripted "reality" TV programs is nothing more than a replica of its viewers' unfulfilled dreams and hopes.

Finally, rapidly changing technology is yet another factor. The switch to HD and digital format opened Pandora's box for Internet telecasting, pushing aside many conventional cable services. The latest 3D TV is taking its first steps and at times, even the most scholarly viewers prefer crisp picture clarity over deeper intellectual content with somewhat lesser picture quality.

So where does all this transformation leave the struggling, independent Armenian television channels? How must they adapt in order to be able to sustain and improve the media form which has countless possibilities of uniting the nation, strengthening the national identity, and presenting us to the rest of the world?

A culprit, a friend, a repository of memories, entertainment, a real-life substitute, a measure of success, or a waste of time – call the television industry whatever you want, but its influence and power are undeniable. And whether or not this will be our last "television as we know it" issue, only the future will decide.



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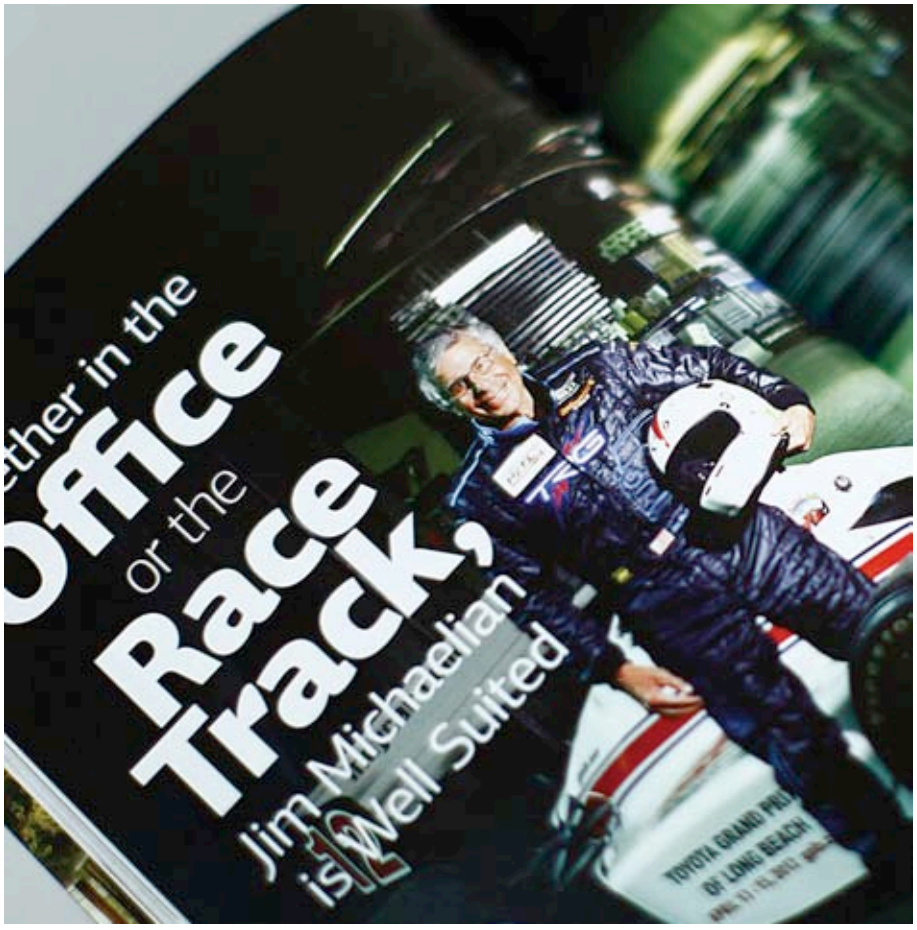
Dear Editor,
Having accumulated nearly just as many speeding tickets as Jim Michaelian, the need for speed is essential to my lifestyle. Racing has been my favorite sport since I was a little boy making bets with my brothers on who can race their bikes faster around the block. Long Beach isn't the most popular city in California but it is interesting to know that the Long Beach Grand Prix is the longest major street race held in the United States. Jim Michaelian takes the lifestyle aspect of being the CEO of the race to a new level; he actually lives and breathes the sport. I admire individuals who pursue their passions through a career because only then will a company truly prosper. He has overcome many obstacles in his life that read much like the racetrack. Although life can throw unexpected turns and curves, it goes on and we are all competing to the finish line. I took great joy in reading about his personal life that I wouldn't be able to read anywhere else. I appreciate the eclectic variety of articles in the magazine and cannot be more proud to tell others about our wonderful Armenian heroes.

Nerses Odabashian
Westchester, California

The city of lights, celebrities galore and of course, fancy cars. Many years ago when hanging out on Melrose was a cool thing to do, I remember passing by the Platinum Motorsports shop on the regular. Little did I know, the shop was being run by two Armenian brothers. As Armenians, we all have an uncle or cousin who own an auto shop, but these guys have turned a common trade into a glamorous business. What also seems only for the male market doesn't hold true anymore either. Both men and women are attracted to the world of customizing their cars to fit their personal lifestyle. A car is very personal in many ways; it usually shows others who you are. In a world geared towards customizing everything from towels to tennis shoes, cars are no exception. Although most of the clientele Platinum handles have a disposable income, customization is done on the smallest scale too. Why choose black leather over beige? Preference, essentially. I have the utmost respect for the Keshishyan brothers for not letting Hollywood get to their heads and maintaining their cultural binds to the important things in life like family.
Great article in the July/August Issue of Yerevan Magazine.

Anton Markarian
Manhattan, New York

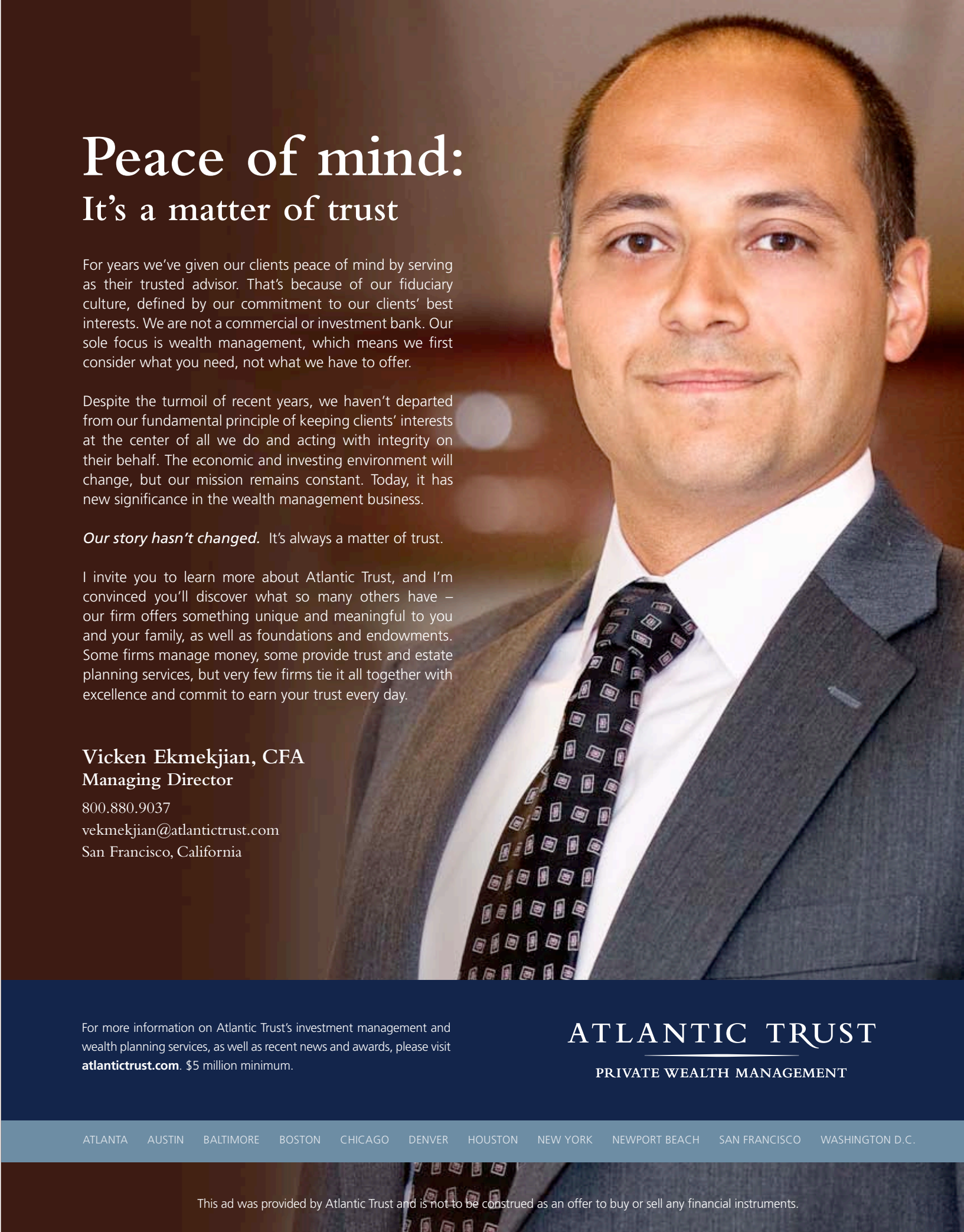


Yerevan Magazine *never fails to amaze me with the selection of articles and picture quality. One thing that I love most is that your magazine has taught me so much about Armenians across the world that I would have otherwise never known. For example, in the last Automobile issue, I read about famous racecar driver Alain Prost. It was a well-written article showcasing his life and accomplishments. In the article, he is depicted as a man who was loved by many and disliked by others – which holds true to almost anyone who has reached the level of success as he did. To come back to my first point, I did not know he was Armenian. Here we have a four time Formula 1 champion, and he is Armenian. I found it pretty awesome that in 1985 he was the first French (Armenian) to be a Formula 1 champion. It is truly inspiring to have our people be associated with almost everything. We have famous racecar drivers, actors, musicians, doctors, and the list goes on and on. Armenians have dabbled in almost every avenue. I must say, I love the themed issues and will continue to be an avid reader of* Yerevan Magazine.

Sanan Kevorkian
Toronto, Ontario

After weeks of looking at the cover with Angela Sarafyan in my brother's office, I decided to pick up Yerevan Magazine *and read it. Whoa, was I pleasantly surprised! I was under the impression the magazine was about business and Armenian news until I flipped through fashion, music, art, and the fun cover stories. The mix of genres applies to anyone who picks up the magazine, including a 26 year-old aspiring fashion designer like myself. Although the main focus is not fashion, the fashion articles are strong and well put together. In the most recent issue, I read about Yerevan native Mari Samvelyan who I just adore. I find her line to be so innovative. Soon starting my own line, I will take inspiration from Mari to make everything in the United States. She is right when she says everything is made in the far east. I feel clothing loses its attention to craftsmanship and the fit gets lost in translation abroad. Most designers follow the mass market because financially, it seems safer. But true fashion lovers appreciate brands like Koshka Mashka for their authenticity to their country and love for one of a kind and unique designs.*

Tara Tawilian
Chicago, Illinois



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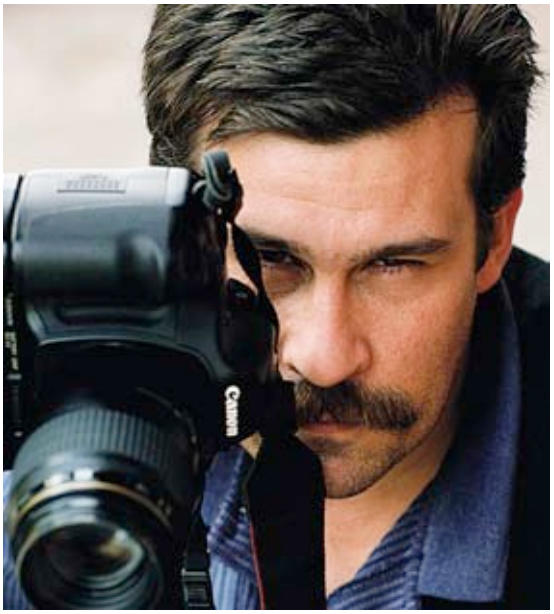

Hayk Melkonyan
Photo Editor, Photographer

Hayk tried out a number of occupations after graduating from Yerevan Polytechnic Institute, but at the end, he decided to stop his search of a profession and focus on photography. Nevertheless, he did not abandon his past hobbies – tourism, hiking and mountain climbing. He likes to capture images of nature and historic landmarks often located in hard-to-reach places. He finds his inspiration in mountains and gorges, forests and caves. Hayk has traveled through all of Armenia's regions, but there are two provinces which he frequently visits on business trips and describes with particular warmth and love – Syunik and Tavush. Hayk has been with *Yerevan Magazine* from the first day of its establishment – he started as a photo reporter, and presently is our photo editor. All of the Armenian travel-related materials throughout the years were mainly illustrated with Hayk's photographs. In this issue, his photos will transfer the readers to the ancient city of Ashtarak and its vicinity.



Mery Khachatryan
Contributing Writer

Born in Yerevan, Mery divided her childhood between Armenia and the U.S. before her family finally settled in Los Angeles. From the moment she stepped into the *Yerevan* offices, the space filled up with her daring ideas, energy and strong opinions about...well, almost everything. This young graduate with an M.B.A. degree from Woodbury University has extensive experience in the financial services and consulting industry and is not afraid to implement her far-reaching plan to introduce our readers to Armenians who have a significant impact in the business community within various industries throughout the world. Completely addicted to CNBC, this 24/7 markets-follower met the iconic financial market expert Jack Bouroudjian to discuss his insider's view on the psychology and strategies of market trading.



Aram Khachatourian
Contributing Writer

Aram spent his childhood and youth in Ukraine. And though this country became his second homeland, he always dreamed about living in Armenia, was interested in the Armenian culture and independently learned the language of his ancestors. After graduating high school, Aram decided to continue his studies in Yerevan, which was not an easy decision but later proved to be the right one. Now he lives in the capital of Armenia, where he works as an interpreter. Tourism, his university major, became not his occupation but his main hobby, kind of an addiction. Aram considers his collaboration with *Yerevan Magazine* an important event in his past years. The result is the project "Armenian Alphabet" – a series of articles each dedicated to a single letter of the alphabet – and earned him the nickname "Mashtots" by the *Yerevan* team.



Verzhine Nikoghosyan
Contributing Writer

Studying cultures and religious traditions of various ethnic groups and writing are Verzhine's fortes. She has two master's degrees – in religious studies from Arizona State University and in linguistics and political science from Brusov Linguistic University in Yerevan. Her continual interest in the world and its diversity inspires her and gives her new perspectives in life. For Verzhine, writing is a means of reaching out to the world and providing a better understanding of people. One of her articles on cultural diversity won second place in a contest conducted by the Journalism Association of Community Colleges for a magazine opinion story and third place in a competition held by the California College Media Association for Magazine Opinion Stories. In this issue read her first *Yerevan Magazine* story about culinary virtuoso Zov Karamardian.

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Tigran Tovmasyan

Armenians in 2012 Olympic Games

Three of the 25 athletes who represented Armenia in the 2012 Olympics took home a medal. Among the weightlifters, Hripsime Khurshudyan collected Armenia's first medal in London, a bronze. Wrestling had the largest amount of Armenian athletes, seven, two of whom medaled. Arsen Julfalakyan earned the silver in Men's Greco-Roman 74kg and Artur Aleksanyan won the bronze in Men's Greco-Roman 96kg category. Armenia ended the Olympics ranking 60 among the 204 countries participating, finishing ahead of countries such as Belgium, Finland, Greece, and Portugal. Aside from the athletes representing Team Armenia, an estimated seven athletes of Armenian descent competed for other countries. Arsen Galstyan secured Russia's first Olympic gold in the 60-kg judo competition. Misha Aloyan and David Ayrapetyan won bronze medals in boxing, again for Russia. Gymnastics world champion Arthur Akopyan was the personal coach of McKayla Maroney (left) and helped her to win a gold medal with the "Fab Five" U.S. gymnastics team and a silver medal in the vault competition. Also, Coach Adam Krikorian led the United States women's water polo team to its first ever Olympic gold medal.

World's Best Chess Trainer

FIDE, the governing body for the World Chess Trainer's Commission, has recognized Armenia's national chess team coach, Grandmaster Arshak Petrosyan, as the World's Best Trainer 2011 and awarded him the Mikhail Botvinnik Medal. Last year the Armenian National Team won the world championship in Ningbo, China. This is the second time that Petrosyan was recognized as the World's Best Trainer. The Grandmaster won the Mikhail Botvinnik Medal in 2008 when the Armenian National Team became a two-time Olympic Champion. Meanwhile, FIDE released the rating list of the world's top chess players and Armenia's chess master Levon Aronyan is second on the list with 2,816 points.



PanArmenian PHOTO

Entrance visas at RA border

Foreign citizens of Armenian origin will have the opportunity to obtain entrance visas for the Republic of Armenia at the RA border passing points. Before this, embassies and consulates of the RA have been granting entrance visas to citizens of foreign states who entered Armenia through an established visa regime. The resolution draft was developed by the Department for Visas and Passports of the RA Police after discussions between the RA Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora and the RA National Security Service.



PanArmenian PHOTO

Karabakh President Re-Elected

Bako Sahakian was re-elected for a second five-year term as President of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the July 19 elections. "Five years from now we will see Artsakh more economically developed, flourishing and beautiful," Sahakyan told journalists. According to the NKR Office in the United States, about 100 foreign observers from two dozen countries, including current and former members of the European and national parliaments, monitored the vote and judged its overall conduct as fair and transparent. RA President Serzh Sargsyan sent a congratulatory note to his counterpart. Members of the U.S. Congress, among them Representatives Howard Berman, Brad Sherman and Adam Schiff, congratulated the citizens and leaders of Nagorno Karabakh on the democratic conduct of their presidential elections. Co-chairs of the Caucus on Armenian issues in the U.S. Congress, Representatives Frank Pallone and Ed Royce issued a statement calling the election "another important day in the history of independence and democratic freedom for the people of Artsakh."



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PanArmenian PHOTO

International Legal Forum

For the first time, Armenia was the host country for the 7th International Legal Forum for Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). More than 100 leading lawyers from 25 countries, including representatives of international law firms such as Franklin & Franklin, Freshfield and Allen & Overy came together to touch base on legal issues facing businesses in the newly independent CIS countries. The forum has been a success in terms of bringing together legal advisors from each country to share the knowledge and local know-how needed for successful business development in the dynamically growing CIS markets. Armenia's premier legal advisory services provider, Ameria Group, was pivotal in the selection of Armenia as the host country.



AGBU World Games

Over 1,700 athletes, members and supporters gathered in Los Angeles for a week of athletic, cultural and social events from July 28 to August 5. The AGBU 2012 World Games' week-long series of activities kicked off the opening ceremony at the Pasadena City College Stadium. Famous composer, record producer and singer David Foster as well as Armenian singers took the stage and welcomed participants. In its near 60-year history, the World Games has brought international youth to various global cities with the goal of reinforcing their commitment to the organization and lifelong friendships with peers through good sportsmanship and teamwork. This year, over 500 young athletes from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, France, Uruguay and the U.S. gathered in what is unofficially dubbed as the capital of the Armenian diaspora: Los Angeles. Day in and day out, the World Games attendees were on the fields or in the stands, but in the evening they had the opportunity to relax and enjoy many planned social and cultural events that were made possible by the World Games Committee and a dedicated network of over 200 volunteers who have been hard at work for nearly a year.

A New Program at Chamlian School

A new Armenian language instruction program will be implemented at Chamlian Armenian School beginning this fall. The program's mission, titled The Saroyan Project, is to develop and implement an Armenian language program that would follow a new instructional approach – one that would adopt a contemporary curriculum with creative and effective teaching methodologies. To develop the program, the school administration formed a committee consisting of members from UCLA's Armenian Department as well as Chamlian's Western and Eastern Armenian Department Chairpersons. "We will start with grade one for now and propagate gradually to other grades, and we hope that the program will be successful and appreciated," said project director Dr. Talar Chahinian-Mahroukian.





Official language of Los Angeles Elections

The Los Angeles City Council approved a motion from Councilmember Paul Krekorian to add the Armenian language to the city's election materials. "For many naturalized citizens who speak English as a second language the language barrier can be an intimidating and daunting barrier to full and informed participation in the voting process that is their right," Councilmember Paul Krekorian said. Armenian is the third most commonly spoken language in the city, and about 30,000 Armenian-Americans are registered to vote in Los Angeles, yet Armenian is not one of the six languages now included on election materials. The program will be put into effect in 2015.

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Armenian Little Singers in Japan

During a 40-day concert tour in Japan, the Armenian Little Singers children's choir presented Armenian and international classical songs, modern music, jazz and bossa nova. The Armenian Little Singers performed 16 concerts in the Japanese cities of Yamagata, Yokohama, Sano, Tochigi, Kitakyusyu, Marugame's, and met with famous cultural figures, prominent artists and Japanese youth. The choir was invited to perform by the famous Japanese Min On organization, which launches over 1,000 concerts annually. The tour is dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Armenian-Japanese diplomatic relations and the 500th anniversary of the first Armenian printed book. The singers visited the recently devastated Kyusyu Island and sang for the bereaved Japanese families. The Armenian Little Singers children's choir was originally established in 1992 by Tigran Hekekyan, Professor of Choral Conducting at Komitas State Conservatory in Armenia, and it has since won many awards at international chorus competitions.



Photolure



Street Festival in London

The Armenian community in the UK celebrated the music, dance, art, literature, and food of Armenia in the Second Annual Armenian Street Festival in London. The aim of the festival is to unite London Armenians by preserving their Armenian identity and promoting the Armenian culture and heritage. The street festival featured Armenian and Mediterranean food, a concert in London's St. Sarkis Church, live street entertainment, games and face painting for children, a magician, raffles, shopping stalls and more. The festival was organized by the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Great Britain and Ireland and the Armenian Embassy to the UK. The list of distinguished guests included the President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan; H.G. Bishop Vahan Hovhanessian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of GB and Ireland; H.E. Karine Kazinian, Ambassador of Armenia to the UK; Baroness Caroline Cox, a cross-bench member of the British House of Lords; and other dignitaries including ambassadors, diplomats, local government representatives, business owners and cultural associations. During his visit to Great Britain, Serzh Sargsyan and his official delegation held meetings with the representatives of the Armenian community of Great Britain and attended a reception organized by Hayastan All-Armenian Fund's British chapter. Earlier, President Sargsyan attended a reception given on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II to honor visiting dignitaries and heads of states attending the Olympics.

Pantomimefest in Tsakhkadzor

Pantomimefest, the international mime festival held in Tsakhkadzor, was marked by the unveiling of the monument to Leonid Yengibaryan, a famous mime and circus actor, and the People's Artist of the Armenian SSR. Sculptor David Minasian is the creator of the monument. Pantomimefest 2012 was held from August 10-15 and brought together actors and theater groups from Denmark, Poland, Italy, Japan, Turkey, Kazakhstan and Armenia. During these five days, the world's most exciting mime theatre companies presented wonders of the mime arts and pantomime plays on the streets during the day and on the open-air stage in the evenings. Other events included forums, workshops and master classes. The tradition of pantomime in Armenia has a centuries-old history, but the recreation of the modern pantomime culture is connected with name of the Yengibaryan.





Vice Dean at Southwestern Law School

Professor Anahid Gharakhanian, a longtime member of the Armenian Bar Association, has been appointed as Vice Dean for Academic Affairs at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles. In her new capacity, she will be in charge of the overall academic program, faculty appointments, faculty development and Southwestern's self-study process. Professor Gharakhanian will continue to serve as Director of the Externship Program.

As a member of the faculty since 2002, Dean Gharakhanian has taught Legal Research and Writing and a unique course on Correctional Education. She was instrumental in the redevelopment of Southwestern's unique Legal Analysis, Writing and Skills (LAWS) program. She also greatly expanded the Externship Program to become one of the largest in the country, and served as a Faculty Advisor to the PLEAS part-time day program. She is also Faculty Advisor to the Armenian Law Students Association and recently spearheaded efforts to create the new Southwestern Armenia Fellowship with the Ministry of Justice in Armenia.



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Golden Apricot Festival

The results of Yerevan's Golden Apricot 9th International Film Festival were summed up with winners announced at the closing ceremony of the festival. Belarusian director Sergei Lozintsa's *In the Fog* won Best Feature Film and received the Golden Apricot from the head of the jury, director Victor Erice. The Silver Apricot – a special prize for Feature Film has been given to *It Looks Pretty from a Distance*, directed by Anka Sasnal and Wilhelm Sasnal from Poland. *Five Broken Cameras*, directed by Emad Burnat, Palestine, has become the Best Documentary Film. *If Only Everyone*, directed by Natalia Belauskene, Armenia, has been recognized as the Best Armenian Fiction Film. *Armenian Rhapsody*, directed by Cassiana Der Haroutiounian, Cesar Gananian, Gary Gananian, Brazil, was named as the Best Armenian Documentary. This year, the Golden Apricot took place on July 8-15, with an unprecedented 1,120 applicants from 70 countries worldwide. The festival featured its traditional competition and non-competition programs, the Tribute and Retrospective screenings. For the past several years, the festival has provided a perfect opportunity not only for a cultural exchange of expertise, but also for partnership and cooperation between filmmakers of Armenia and the international community.

iPad Application

The creative team Zybas has developed the first ever iPad software program for those who wish to learn Armenian. The application teaches the Armenian alphabet in addition to more than 250 words and 40 poems. It consists of three sections, of which the first section is very comprehensive and multi-functional. It teaches the users to read, write and pronounce the Armenian letters, as well as to master the words and the poems. A special subsection behind each letter allows users to see and hear each letter and a corresponding image, as well as write or draw the letter and learn five words beginning with it. It also offers learners an opportunity to hear and read a poem corresponding to the given letter. The last two sections are simpler. They are designed for browsing letters and seeing the images of animals and objects. The idea was proposed by two Armenian designers of the team, David Margaryan and Samvel Hovhannisyan.





Armenian Sports Encyclopedia

TV journalist and sports columnist Avedis Bayramian has published a revised and completed edition of his original book *Armenian Sportspedia*. The book is a result of his lifetime of research and data collection of the Armenian athletes, coaches, sports administrators, press and media, artwork, stamps, medals and any other type of information or memorabilia pertaining to the history and present day athletic movement in Armenia and around the world. The comprehensive 700-plus-page volume is a valuable reference source not only for Armenian sports writers and journalists, but also for a dedicated army of Armenian-speaking sports fans. Back in Armenia, Bayramian, whose daytime job was being a college-level instructor of Theoretical Mechanics, wrote soccer-related articles for Armenia's main sports newspaper *Hayastani Phisculturnik*.



Biometric Passports

In accordance with a legislation passed last year, beginning June 1, 2012, citizens of Armenia are able to get identification cards that will certify their identity and nationality within the territory of the republic. Those who intend to leave the country will be able to obtain a passport with biometric data as a travel document. The identification card contains an electronic database, individual cryptographic keys, electronic digital signature and certificates for identity. A biometric passport is a combined paper and electronic passport that contains biometric information that can be used to authenticate the identity of travelers. In particular, biometric passports will contain the citizen's name, date and place of birth, photograph and two fingerprints. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of RA stated that the process is voluntary, and it will be the citizen's decision whether to switch to new IDs and passports or not.

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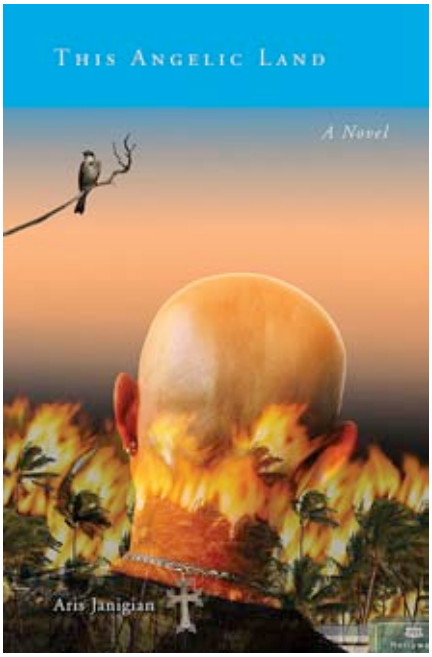
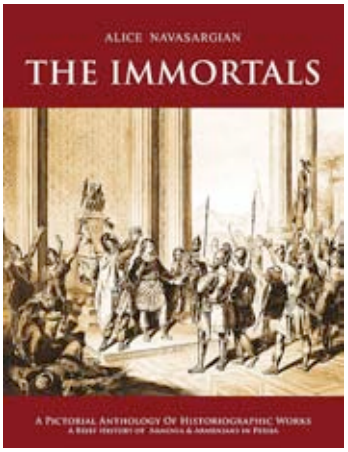


Aris Janigian

This Angelic Land

West of West

Twenty years have passed since the 1992 Los Angeles Rodney King Riots – the most destructive riots in United States history. To date, no work of literary fiction has broached the subject matter head-on. In *This Angelic Land*, Janigian – author of *Bloodvine* and *Riverbig* – tells the story of Adam Derderian, a hip, 27 year-old bar owner during his six-day journey through the surreal heart of Los Angeles and one of the city's darkest episodes. Seeming to carry scant memory of Lebanon's civil war – from which he fled while still a boy – Derderian now finds himself revisiting the world he thought he had escaped. Derderian engages with Armenian gangsters, members of the Nation of Islam, a Hancock Park playboy and a Kurdish scenic artist as he watches his always uneasy adopted city ransacked and set ablaze. Unflinchingly candid and ingeniously crafted, the novel is a brave and timely tour de force that reckons with the American soul.



Alice Navasargian

The Immortals: A Pictorial Anthology of Historiographic Works (A Brief History of Armenia & Armenians in Persia), Volume 1

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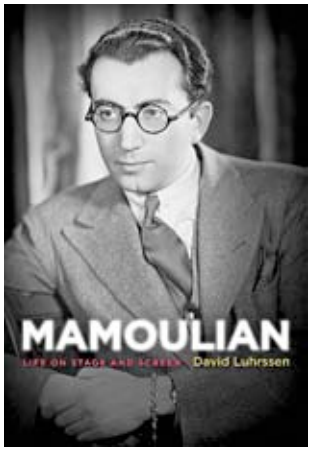
How to create a voluminous reference book that is not only informative, but also an entertaining page turner? Navasargian presents an anthology that is a brief history of Armenia, Armenians and Iranian-Armenians. Lavishly illustrated by the works of artists of various genres and time periods and historical photographs, it is a brilliant testament to the author's years of meticulous research and her keen interest in the arts and culture of the Armenian people. The author presents the history of both ancient and modern Persian-Armenian culture, summarizes the life and works of historical figures and their role in the Armenian culture in general. Artist Gagik Oganesyan provided the graphic design and illustrations, and Aram Topchian was the translator of the numerous multilingual primary sources included in the anthology.



David Luhrssen

Mamoulian: Life on Stage and Screen

The University Press of Kentucky

In this meticulously researched biography, Luhrssen paints the influential director as a socially conscious artist who sought to successfully combine art and commercial entertainment. Luhrssen not only reveals the fascinating personal story of an important yet neglected figure, but he also offers a tantalizing glimpse into the extraordinarily vibrant American film and theater industries during the twenties, thirties, and forties. An Armenian national raised in Russia, Rouben Mamoulian (1897--1987) studied in the influential Stanislavski studio, renowned as the source of the "method" acting technique. Shortly after immigrating to New York in 1926, he created a sensation with an all-black production of *Porgy* (1927). He then went on to direct the debut Broadway productions of three of the most popular shows in the history of American musical theater: *Porgy and Bess* (1935), *Oklahoma!* (1943), and *Carousel* (1945).



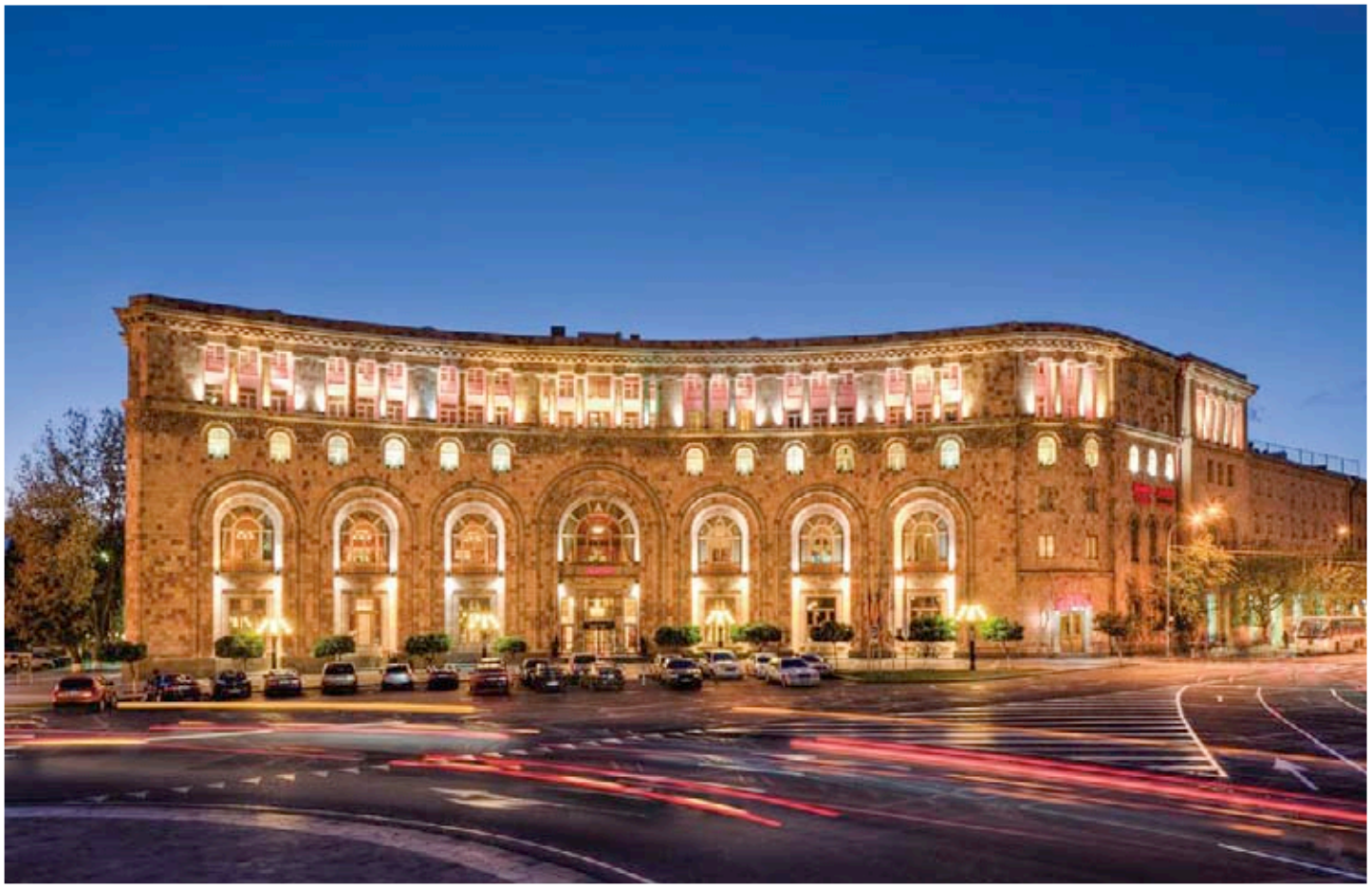
Hagop Arsenian

Towards Golgotha: The Memoirs of Hagop Arsenian, a Genocide Survivor

Translated and Annotated by Arda Arsenian Ekmekji

Haigazian University Press,

Towards Golgotha narrates the Memoirs of pharmacist Hagop Arsenian, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Written originally in Armenian, it contains two parts. The first part narrates the early life of Arsenian in the suburbs of Constantinople and then the eventual deportation of his whole family all the way to Aleppo, Syria. The second part describes the Arsenian's family life in Palestine from 1919 until 1940, especially in Jerusalem and Gaza, where Hagop Arsenian practices as a pharmacist. His granddaughter Arda Arsenian Ekmekji has translated the entire manuscript into English with historical annotations and references. The book includes a foreword written by French Historian: Prof. Raymond Kevorkian, and a preface, introduction, prologue and epilogue by the translator. These contain 250 pages of the original manuscript.



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Burning Man

Is it a festival? A pagan rite? An art event? The Burning Man Festival doesn't fit into any existing category and is the finest example of self-expression and liberty of the mind. The venue for the event is the Black Rock Desert of Nevada, which turns into the Black Rock City for the duration of the festival. During the week, celebrations and partiers are everywhere and there are no instructions on anything. The festival stands on its own and makes its own rules. Many participants describe the event as an experiment in community living, art, radical self-expression and radical self-reliance. It may guide you to a new outlook on life as well as a new way to look inward. The Burning Man Festival takes its name from the ritual burning of a 40 foot tall wooden effigy. The ritual burning of the Man on Saturday evening marks both an ending and a new beginning. Because of the variety of goals fostered by the attendees, known as "Burners," the festival does not have a single focus. Features of the event are defined by the participants and include community activities, artwork, absurdity, deco modification and revelry.



Armenian Independence Day

On September 21, people all over the Republic of Armenia celebrate their national holiday, Independence Day. On this occasion, different gala events take place in nearly all regions of Armenia, but the main festivities – open-air concerts, performances and parties – are held in Yerevan. The festive atmosphere continues all day long and concludes with a celebratory fireworks show at midnight. This year as usual, dozens of events in different districts of Yerevan will be held within the framework of celebrations dedicated to the 21st anniversary of its independence. Well-known Armenian performers will sing traditional folk songs, while dancers in national costumes will perform dances of various regions of the country. Armenian officials will visit the Yerablur Military Cemetery to pay tribute to the memory of soldiers killed during the years of the Artsakh liberation war.

Dussehra Festival

Whenever we think of India, we think of a land of festivals that characterize the social, cultural and religious aspirations of the people. One of India's best-loved festivals is Dussehra or Dasara, a ten-day extravaganza celebrated around the country in October. In many parts of India it is also called Durga Puja or Navratri and celebrates the victory of good over evil. In the south of India, Dussehra is very popular, but this festival is predominantly a northern Indian festival, thus Delhi and Varanasi are popular places to witness the celebrations.





Festival of Lights

"Light is life, light is energy, light is being able to speak all languages of the world and light connects people," said Birgit Zander, the organizer of the Festival of Lights. For two weeks every October, Berlin turns into a sparkling metropolis with a firework of illuminations during one of the largest admission-free parties in the world. This year, more than 45 of Berlin's most iconic landmarks and historic buildings will be illuminated every night. Boasting over 1,500 daily events, the German capital promises an exciting event program in 2012, from museum nights and design festivals to symphonies, sports events and outdoor fairs.



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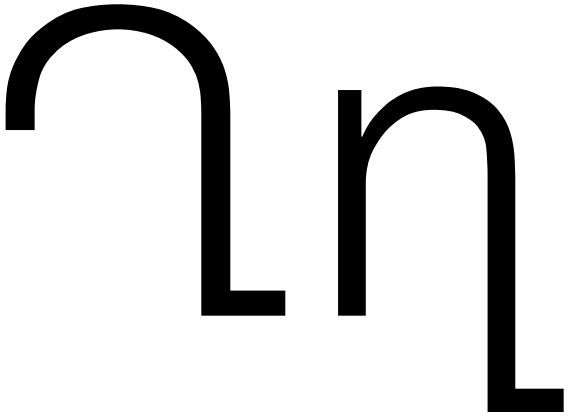
Ղ [gh]

Text **Aram Khachatourian**

Ղ (gh) is the eighteenth letter of the Armenian alphabet. Its name is — ղաւտ (*ghat*) and has a numerical value of 90.



The shapes of letter Ղ in manuscripts of different centuries



862



1063



1359



Suren Manvelyan

In contemporary Armenian, the letter Ղ denotes a consonant, which can be produced similar to a voiced fricative /ġ/, a sound in between [gh] and [h]. However, initially Ղ had a completely different phonetic representation – it was a variation of the [l] sound, which could be proved by tracing it to many words borrowed from other languages, in which Ղ replaces the letter that denotes the [l] sound. For example, the Greek



τάλαντον [*tálanton*] – talent – transforms in Armenian into the word տաղանդ [*taghand*] and the Greek τιτλος [*titlos*] – title, turns into տիտղոս [*titghos*]. The same phenomenon is observed in words that have Armenian origin in other languages. For example, the Georgian ტალავარი [*talavaree*] – a tent, and the Armenian տաղավար [*taghavar*]. When and why did the letter Ղ start denominating the sound [gh]? There is a popular opinion among linguists that the tendency started as early as the 9th century. According to linguist Hrachya Acharyan, the transformation of the sound was originated in "one of the provinces [gavar] after which it gradually spread across the entire country." Analyzing words with Ղ and Լ [l] in the works of authors of various centuries, Acharyan concluded that in the early 800s, the sound [gh] appeared first in the Northern provinces – among the Armenians who lived in the territories bordering Caucasian Albania. In the 10th century, the sound was used more in the South but by the 11th century it had spread around the entire country. It's possible that this sound transformation took place under the influence of the languages of neighboring people. The fact that the sound [gh] was present in all these languages, including Georgian, Albanian, Persian and Arabic, as well as the Byzantine variation of the Greek, could serve as a valid consideration in this matter. As for the graphic representation of the Ղ, taking into account its original phonetic meaning, its graphic form is traced to the Greek lambda [Λ] or the Armenian lyun (Լ). The word ղատասութիւն [*ghatasutyun*] – is based on the letter (R) – which means Burr, referring to the distinctive uvular pronunciation of R, the pronunciation of the sound [gh] in place of the [r] sound. That's approximately the way the French pronounce their famous [r] sound.

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Is Armenia an attractive market for investors? What does Armenia have to offer to its Diaspora – Armenians who have the money and the willingness to run businesses in Armenia? Is it possible to make money and make a difference in Armenia from a distance? How can we best use Armenia's biggest resource – its Diaspora – to advance Armenia to another level? Armenia's premier advisory and financial services provider, Ameria Group of Companies (*AmeriaGroupInc.com*), has the answers, serving that very mission to bridge the Diaspora to Armenia's promising business and investment opportunities by providing full-fledged advisory and financial services. The founding members of Ameria Group are successful Diaspora Armenian businessmen such as Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan. In partnership with professionals in Armenia, these entrepreneurial minds have invested in Ameria in Armenia and now say it has been a profitable and meaningful investment.

Text **Anush A. Hovsepyan** | Photo **Ameria Photostock**

Prominent investment banker Ruben Vardanyan, listed in Fortune Magazine's "25 Rising Stars" as the next generation of global leaders, is the chair of Ameria's board. Venture capitalist and MIT professor Noubar Afeyan is Ameria's founding board member. He believes the Diaspora Armenians need an institutional approach towards doing business in Armenia: "Today Armenia is emerging as an attractive place to do business. We have to start thinking about institutional relationships, not just individual relationships. Ameria Group is one such company in Armenia with the means to encourage the exchange of expertise and investments." Glendale City Council member Rafi Manoukian is also now with Ameria Group as its COO. Ameria started out with only five employees and a $100,000 investment. Today, with a team of more than 500 professionals, $500 million in assets and branches across the country, Ameria Group of Companies is growing beyond the borders of Armenia. It has attracted multimillions in foreign investments and helped many businesses successfully grow in the emerging Armenian market. Ameria stands behind the development of the world's largest aerial tramway to Tatev Monastery, the largest mergers and acquisition deals in Armenia's commercial real estate sector, specialized in hotel acquisitions and sales, equity financing of more than $200 million and more. Ameria group is renowned in the region for the Ameria Legal & Management Advisory, Ameriabank and Ameria Asset Management. It is the only financial institution in the South Caucasus region recognized as a Global Growth Champion by the DAVOS World Economic Forum for its exceptional growth and expertise. The *Banker,* published by the *Financial Times,* names Ameria "the best bank in Armenia." What direction will Ameria take next? Today, Ameria is a pan-Armenian advisory group that reaches out to Armenians worldwide as a one-stop resource for Diaspora investors who want to make money and make a difference in Armenia. Since 2011, the Ameria Group of Companies has established a presence in the United States through Ameria Group Inc. Ameria's founding board member, CEO & founder of the multi-million dollar company Flagship Ventures, Noubar Afeyan addresses the ways Diaspora can be involved in Armenia's economy.

You and other like-minded Armenian businessmen have been making changes in Armenia through the development of the banking and business sector. You compared Armenia to a start-up. How can a country be compared to a start-up?

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, I think, Armenia was forced to become a start-up economically. The country had to think about trade-offs and priorities, identifying its core competencies that would give the country a competitive advantage. A group of entrepreneurs formed Armenia2020 project for Armenia's development to make systemic changes at the government level, private sector and society at large. Then, in partnership with Armenia's government, we founded the National Competitiveness Foundation to begin the process of creating joint projects. For that, we needed business models that would allow local operations but with global standards. Ameria is a direct result of all that analysis and is a venture geared to move the country forward.

Was the development of Armenia's financial sector a part of Armenia's competitiveness plan?

Definitely, but in order to reach that goal, we needed to adhere to global standards beyond the local Armenian market. It was then that Ameria was established with an aim to be a domestic venture with world-class standards – a big attitude change. Ameria's organizational culture, commitment to excellence with continuous staff development and company branding are all consistent with its "dare to dream big and work hard to achieve the dream" philosophy. Ameria has set a benchmark of success and growth.

What were your intentions when entering the Armenian market as a Diaspora Armenian investor? Why did you take the risk?

Many Diaspora Armenians invest in Armenia in the familiar fields. For instance, if they have a construction business in America, they put money in constructing buildings in Armenia. Why and how to



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Ameria founding members Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan at Ameria in Armenia.



↑
Afeyan with President Sargsyan, at the inaugural reception of Ameria Group Inc. in California, September 2011.

invest in Armenia depends on the business interests and the support system available in the country. Ameria provides that support platform. For me, Ameria is a way to participate in all key aspects of the economy by providing capital, expertise and access to my network, allowing me to have a larger reach, rather than narrowly investing in tomato processing plants, for example. Focused on core competencies in each sector, Ameria strategically allocates the capital to produce the highest return for investors in an emerging market. The Diaspora investors can have immediate participation in Armenia's economy by investing in Ameriabank's term deposits. Ameria has a special Diaspora Deposits program that allows for six months, one year, or even longer terms deposits at high rates. My recommendation to potential investors would be to start small and do it right the first time with the right partners. Get your toe in the water and go from there.

Why it is worth investing in Armenia?

It's one thing to say you should invest all your money in Armenia, it's another thing to say you should allocate a portion. As you gain more confidence, you can decide to increase that portion. Armenia is developing largely based on the power of the Diaspora Armenians who utilize the business opportunities in Armenia's emerging market. Investments in Armenia can generate higher returns through terms that don't exist in the mature markets of the Western world. For example, in Armenia the interest rate is 8-10% for a term deposit; in the U.S. it is 1 or 1.5%. It's really about getting in at the early stages of economic development, which also involves higher risks. So, it's about creating a balance of risk and reward potential.

What does Ameria mean to you as an investor?

I'm a founding investor and a board member. I've been involved in cosulting and governing the organization. Coming from the U.S. and the innovation sector, I bring a different point of view than the other board members who have Russian marketing and banking experiences. When in Armenia, I know how important it is to be able to get the banking support with the same international standards we're used to in the West. Ameriabank provides that. Not only does it add a business value to the economy, but also a strategic one. Ameria is a one-stop resource for entrepreneurs, providing full-fledged support and advisory services in the legal, managerial and financial aspects of their business. It is great to have a world-class company with local know-how in Armenia's emerging market.

During his 25-year career as an inventor, entrepreneur, CEO and venture capitalist, Dr. Afeyan has co-founded and built 25 successful life science and technology startups. Afeyan is a recipient of the Technology Pioneer 2012 award from the World Economic Forum and the prestigious Wall Street Journal Technology Innovation Award. Afeyan is also the recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. ***Ameria Group****, Armenia's premier advisory and financial services provider, is one of Afeyan's successful undertakings that also has an emotional value for the entrepreneur. He believes Ameria is a much needed bridge connecting the Diaspora to Armenia's promising business opportunities. In his words, Ameria is unique as it brings world-class expertise and local know-how for all those who want to make a positive change in the country through business ventures as opposed to pure charity.* ■

Ameria Projects

Among the many awards and 200 projects implemented in the past decade by Ameria, below are listed the ones that have contributed to Armenia's economic development:

- Development of world's longest aerial ropeway to Tatev Monastery
- Business plan for the largest mining company in the region – Zangezour Copper-Molybdenum
- Investment projects of more than $500 million
- Equity financing for Armenian businesses of more than $200 million.

Ameria Awards

- The Best Trade Finance Bank 2012: Global Finance Award
- The Best Bank in Armenia 2011: Euromoney 2011 Awards for Excellence
- The Best Bank in Armenia 2010: *The Banker*, a magazine published by the *Financial Times Group.*



The Island of Taste

100 kilometers into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Morocco, there is a magical archipelago that has helped to shape much of Western history and continues to be a source of delicious adventure.

Text and photo **Roger Kupelian**





The archipelago of the Canary Islands consists of seven islands in total, but one looms largest in my memories: Gran Canaria and its capital, Las Palmas.

Forget Tweety Bird and other canaries of renown, the songbirds loved by millions were named after the islands, and not the other way around. The origin of the name Islas Canarias literally means the Islands of Dogs. It is thought that the original inhabitants of the Canary Islands, the Guanches, were known to worship dogs. Columbus stopped here to resupply his vessels before continuing on to his discovery (for Europeans anyway) of the New World. The Guanches soon fell under the heel of the Spanish Colonialists and the Canaries are now the farthest outpost of the European Union.

My first experience here was as a child vacationing away from my native West Africa as I remembered William Saroyan's famous quote about two Armenians coming together and creating their own Armenia. To prove Saroyan's point, our vacation was a visit to the sole Armenian inhabitants of that part of the ocean, a former hand model and her son. The time was the mid 1970's and the experience left a lasting impression on me. The place was amazing — a tamed slice of Spanish Europe where people walked the promenade, enjoyed the ocean, trekked to mountain caves, or made pilgrimage to magnificent churches amidst cobblestoned streets. ▸

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Casa de Colon
(Columbus House)
Las Palmas de Gan
Canaria



Benoît Deniaud

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In 2009 I returned, as a guest of the Animayo (Animation in May) festival in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria run by animator and director Damian Perea Lezcano and Executive Producer Raquel Camacho-Marrero, who pulled in talented animators from around the globe for several days of sharing the latest animation technology and artistic developments in seminars. Also, it should be said, savoring some of the best cuisine in the world. (We joked that the festival should be named re-named Gastronomicon or maybe Gastronanimayo). That first time I presented to the group, I was joined by the notable visual effects supervisor and producer Kevin Blank (Lost, Terra Nova, Cloverfield), and we conducted a master class on visual effects. For a demonstration of the technology we (virtually) destroyed Las Palmas before their very eyes, and named the film Palmas Perdidos (Lost Palmas.) Apparently forgetting what I did to their island home, I was invited back in 2012.

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The plane ride from the United States to Gran Canaria is not easy. After over 12 hours of flying you've got to make it through Barajas Airport in Madrid which includes the normal lack of American-style taking turns in the customs lines, then take a tram ride and get through to the connecting flight at another terminal. The flight to the Canaries is a quiet one...everyone on board is simply exhausted. But once we landed, we were greeted by a burst of raw positive energy otherwise known as Carmen Diaz-Medina (of the Gran Canaria Film Commission). Keep in mind the time difference: it's easier if you're coming from Armenia or the Middle East, but deadly from the U.S. Luckily for us, Carmen was as good as a can of Red Bull energy drink, restoring our depleted reserves of vigor.

The mountainous terrain allows for picture-postcard vistas, framing the city and sky around the island in a very dramatic manner. Taxis are readily available for those who grow tired of walking, and make getting around very easy.



Berto García

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Las Palmas is the capital city of the Canary Islands.

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Canine statues in front of the cathedral of Santa Ana, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.



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Juan Dominquez Perez, Vice President of the Cabildo de Gran Canaria flanked by festival guests and Damian Perea Lezcano, director (extreme left).





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Roger Kupelian, far right

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Festival speakers enjoying downtime and Canarian Cuisine at Café Madrid.





Canary Archipelago

Seven islands and half a dozen islets make up the Canary archipelago. They are the tips of hundreds of volcanoes that first erupted from the sea bed 14 million years ago. Teneguia on La Palma last erupted in 1971.

The islands are divided into two provinces. The four western isles making up the province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, are all mountainous; Tererife's colossal dormant volcano, Mount Teide, casts the world's biggest sea-shadow. La Palma, El Hierro, and La Gomera are small and unspoiled islands.

The eastern islands belong to the province of Las Palmas. Rocky, forested Grand Canaria is the biggest island. Lanzarote, by contrast, is flat, with lunar landscapes, while Fuerteventura has long, virgin beaches.

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Las Palmas, the largest city in the Archipelago, has retained many of its colonial charms. This year, the organizers moved the festival to a beautiful new venue in the heart of the city. Mercifully, upon arrival we were informed that the tired newcomers would be given a day off to recuperate and see the sights before starting in on their presentations. Gran Canaria lies on a peninsula and narrows markedly towards the tip of the peninsula. The "big city" part of the experience is a half hour's walk from our hotel on the Riviera. If one chose to, one could visit a topless beach and in fifteen minutes be back to dining and shopping in the heart of the city, whether in the sleepier cafes and shops closer to the water or the more commercial tourist areas further inland. The mountainous terrain allows for picture-postcard vistas, framing the city and sky around the island in a very dramatic manner. Taxis are readily available for those who grow tired of walking, and make getting around very easy. But for actual tours of the island, you want someone who knows the island like the back of her hand. In this case, our day-one savior, Carmen.

Our first full day was spent driving into the mountains above Las Palmas. After paying our respects at the cathedral in Arucas, we journeyed to Cruz de Tejeda and dined at the magnificently placed Hotel Rural El Refugio on traditional Canarian cuisine in sight of Roque Nublo, a precariously perched monolith that remains a must-see for every hiker in that part of the world.

We also visited Teror, a sleepy town with a very famous church, mineral water, and statue of the Virgin Del Pino (Virgin of the Pines) that I had visited as a child. This statue was laden with jewelry and vestments from the faithful beseeching her for favors or bringing adoration. This was a fond memory, enforced by a lavish souvenir that decorated our walls in Freetown, and I wanted to see how Our Lady had held up over time. The church was still there, as was the grand old tree in front of it, but the statue, due to past thefts of donations, had been moved behind

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The cathedral of Santa Ana Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

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Guanche Cave Dwellings overlooking the capital





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From exotic plant life, to lavish beaches and blue waters to actual Sand Dunes, Gran Canaria's micro-climate is a location scout's dream.



Santi Martin



Pedro Szekely

↓
The Basilica de Nuestra Senora de Pino. The Virgin Mary is said to have appeared in a pine tree nearby in the 15th Century. Our Lady of the Pine is no the island's patron saint.



Pedro Szekely





Pano Philou

→
Almost anything goes in Gran Canaria's laid back carnival fun.

protective glass. The church itself had a welcome, calming energy to it and a few moments inside, away from the outside world did wonders for the world within. In fact, the light quality in this part of the world, coupled with the architecture, produced an amazing effect that made snapping pictures a real pleasure. It was as pleasurable as sampling Gran Canaria's staple honey rum, or miniature wrinkled potatoes in Mojo, followed by amazing desserts including Gofio (a flour created by grinding roasted sweet corn). If you had inherited the Middle Eastern sweet tooth, then sample another delicacy, known as Bienmesabe (from ground almonds, lemon zest and eggs, a first cousin to the French frangipane) on a couple of scoops of organic vanilla ice cream.

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For the 2012 colloquium, my presentation was to be made with my wife (and renowned costume designer) Alina Khanjian, and was focused on *East of Byzantium*, my project dealing with the historic events of Armenia's Christianization and the Persian Wars that followed. Apparently Spaniards have an appreciation for history, coming from a very old culture themselves. To them, Khach Vartan was the Armenian El Cid. The seminars, or master classes, went rather well. Alina's presentation, on creating costumes, was heavily attended. Starry-eyed fashion students hung onto her every word, from her experiences working on film and television productions, to her attendance at last year's Academy Awards (fashionista heaven). After our presentations, Alina and I were asked to sign the Spanish copy of *East of Byzantium Volume 1: War Gods* for the fans, before stealing back to watch the other guests make their presentations: Patryk Kizny and Agniezka Gonczarek, director of photography, and photographer, respectively, ran a master class on time-lapse photography and filmmaking, while making preparations to start on their short film on the fate of the Guanches of the island. Character designer and animator Carlos Grangel presented on his work in films such as *The Prince of Egypt*, *Corpse Bride* and *Kung Fu Panda*, among many others. Animators Alberto Corral (*Iron Man 2*, *Captain America*) and Pablo Gimenez (*Shrek*, *Kung Fu Panda*, *Madagascar*) presented and discussed their work as well. Pascal Blaise, who runs an Oscar-winning studio in Montreal, discussed the producer's side of creating animated works. Academy Award winning animator Alexander Petrov demonstrated his peculiar and laborious oil on glass animation technique, of "moving" a painting through a succession of repaints. His noted short films, especially *The Old Man and the Sea*, are a milestone, having fully painted 29,000 frames over the course of two years.

The light quality coupled with the architecture produced an amazing effect that made snapping pictures a real pleasure. It was as pleasurable as sampling the staple honey rum, or wrinkled potatoes in Mojo, followed by amazing desserts.

Carnival of Las Palmas

Over the last thirty years, the carnival has gone on to become the most socially and economically important festival of the island of Gran Canaria and one of its main tourist attractions. It is a celebration that has known how to adapt to the new demands in leisure and entertainment of a mass media society, while preserving all its traditional flavour. At the same time it has become a festival capable of reinventing itself with the times by incorporating new acts and events. Now, with its anthem *Invitación al Carnaval* by Sindo Saavedra, the festival is a true popular phenomenon whose only goal is revelry in a carnival city.

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Between presentations, the group was able to journey into the oldest part of the city, ending up at any one of a number of amazing eateries and nightspots. Friendly conversation and homegrown jazz filled the night, somehow always bringing us into the late night dinners that are typical of Spanish culture. Opting for a less glitz-and-glamour and more eco-tourism holiday, we skipped over the very popular attractions of resorts in the South section of Gran Canaria. Frequented by millions of visitors from Northern Europe annually, the resorts of the Canaries (glam or eco) are known for the easy-going disposition of the staff and resort hosts. Instead of glam, we focused on regional cuisine and unusual activities; one of which was an archery lesson at the rightly-famous Deportivo Seo club.

Finally, our trip over and bags packed, we were on a 6 a.m. flight away from what truly can be called paradise. It is like Hawaii in its beauty and warmth of the natives, but with a European sophistication and Palm Beach style shopping, all with a homegrown charm. It is also a crucial embarkation point of a once enormous empire that colonized the lands that many of us today call home. After visiting Gran Canaria, the tourists thoughts are not of colonialism and conquistadors, but of the unforgettable tastes of good food and drink with pleasant company. Once a launching point for conquest, Gran Canaria is now the jumping off point for adventure. ■

television — հեռուստատեսություն [he-roos-ta-te-soo-tyun]

You, Me and the TV



Vahram Muradyan

It's you, me and the TV... Ménage á TV to some is a norm, to others it is an absolute no-no. Where do you stand? How many hours a day do you spend watching other people's lives on television when you could use that time to make your own life better? In this issue our respondents genuinely share their affection or intolerance toward TV, responding to a simple question: "How long can you go without TV? What does TV offer these days? Is it a turn-on or turn-off when your special someone always has the TV on while spending time with you?"

Turn On

John Pahlevanian
Merchandise Executive
I cannot go without TV for too long. I have to watch TV before I go to bed. I flip the channels for about half an hour or one hour every night. TV is like a sleeping pill for me. I watch TV to be entertained and relax and forget about daily chores. When I'm with someone special, my TV is off because instead of the entertainment on TV, I have live entertainment.

Alexander Machevsky
Public Relations Expert
I watch TV often because my work depends on it and the information on the news. I can't go more than a few hours without watching because I need to follow the news. TV for me is an instrument for work, but it's also my escape. I watch it to relax. However, when I intend to spend quality time with someone special, my TV goes off for a while, but then it goes back on again.

Ruben Akopyan
Founder, Trumark Marketing
I watch television every day and every evening. TV puts me to sleep. After a long day, I just want to get some entertainment and go to sleep. I can't go without TV too long. I need TV. I mostly watch the entertainment shows that air at night. My favorite is *The Bill Murray Show* on HBO. Despite my big love for TV, when I am with someone special I absolutely turn it off. I can't be distracted when I am with my woman.

Paul Terzikian
Accountant
TV is becoming one of those selective things. People now can watch what they want and when they want, not necessarily when the program comes on. Now we can record it and fast forward through the commercials. I know a couple of guys who are relatively younger. They don't bother to actually watch traditional cable TV at all. It's all downloaded. If I feel like it, I will turn on the music channel. If I just want to veg out and watch a movie, then I'll turn on a movie channel.

Carlos Rojas
Producer
TV is my business. I have been in the TV industry for about 40 years now, and I certainly can't go long without TV. When I am with someone special though, my TV is definitely off. I've worked for Channel 7 Eyewitness News (Los Angeles affiliate) for 35 years. I am constantly watching and making television programs. I have produced and/or directed a lot of TV shows, such as *General Hospital*, *Sister Kate* and *Midnight Express*. I've done pretty much all of it in the past 35-40 years. TV is a powerful media, a source of information and entertainment that is an important part of my life.

Melina Petrosyan
Owner, Polka Tots Cupcakes
When I get a chance, before I go to sleep I turn on the TV for the 11 o'clock news. I can't go too long without TV because it relaxes me. It also gives me information and ideas about what's happening around me. When with someone special, it can go both ways. It can be on for a while and then off, so that we can spend some quality time with each other without TV.

Edgar Kocharyan
Operations Director, Maf Club
I turn the TV on to relax and get my mind off work even when I am tight on time. When with my significant other, the TV might be on in the beginning. Then it goes off for a while, and then we might turn it back on. Since I work all day, I want to give my girl my undivided attention when home.

Jacqueline Russo
Model
I watch TV probably once a week. I turn the TV on if I don't have anything else to do. I have certain shows that I like – *Gossip Girls*, *90210*. Sometimes I watch *Glee*. That's about it. When I am with someone special, the TV is off unless we decide to watch a movie.

Turn Off

Oscar Rivera
Actor
You are not going to believe this, but I don't watch TV. I am an actor and I am always busy. I am never home. The only time I watch TV is when soccer is on. I used to play soccer, and I am a big fan of Spain's soccer team. I can live without watching TV for a very long time. The news is so stressful and depressing anyway.

Mac Jay
Fashion Designer
I don't watch that much TV but rather movies on Netflix. I am not too crazy about American TV shows. I prefer movies to TV shows, especially European movies. I haven't watched television for the past eight months. TV shows are boring. It's all scripted and not that authentic. I don't watch the news on TV either because it makes me depressed. So, I am not a big fan of TV, but I watch a lot of movies. I watch three to four movies a day. I am a fashion designer and movies inspire me. When I am with someone special, my TV is off and romantic music is on with flowing champagne.

Anna Mirimanova
Paralegal/Entrepreneur
At this particular moment of my life TV is not that important. I am so focused on my career, but from time to time I do watch it. I watch TV to be entertained and to acquire some information. To be honest with you, I can go on for weeks without TV. I have so much going on in my life that I have to skip it. And when with someone special, I tend to turn it off because it can be distracting.

Steve Goldfield
Investor/Producer
For what I do, I could go a long time without TV. I am an exotic car driver. I race and that's much more fun than watching television. I like *Family Guy* though, so it makes me turn on the TV occasionally. I turn to TV to be entertained not educated, because if I want to learn something, I'll pick up a book. When I'm in somebody's company, my TV is off and I am "on."

Abraham Likhlyan
Founder, Direct Freight Logistics
I watch TV during the weekends. TV is the box that gives me information and entertainment. During the week the only information I need is for my business, and I take care of that through the Internet. In fact, I get most of my information online and watch TV mostly for entertainment. When I go home the TV is on, and it's a bit distracting. We have older and wiser people in the house, and they are the ones watching television all the time. I would prefer it off more if it were just me.

Andy Scott
Actor & College Professor
I don't watch TV these days. I just download stuff and watch it like that. Actually, I don't own a TV at home. I have a projector and my laptop. I function perfectly well without TV, yet I am an actor. I watch TV episodes, but not on TV.

Anastasia Chintsova
Model
I haven't really had much time to watch TV since I came to the states. I wasn't a TV fan in Russia either. If I need to watch programs, I just do so online. I might sometimes turn on MTV for some music and watch the news in the evenings. However, I could live life without it.

Karen Mantashyan
Producer
I can get along perfectly without TV. I don't' watch Armenian channels at all since I have zero interest in the shows on Armenian TV. There is nothing I can learn from these shows. When with people who are important to us, the TV is never on. Why have the noise of TV and be distracted if we want to connect and communicate with each other and have meaningful conversations?

Anton Kapustin
Professor of Physics
I watch only one show – *Futurama*. How important is TV to me? It has no significance at all. I can go for months or years without it. My TV is almost always off. I could easily survive without it. It is a major waste of time.



Keeping it Real

Whether you love them or hate them, when you hear the name Kardashian, chances are you have an opinion about them. The media has fallen under their enchantment, exasperatingly following every move they make. They are given more media coverage than any other celebrity, more magazine covers, more television shows and more interviews, all due to the tremendous response they garner every time they make an appearance. They have become a new type of American royalty. How did they become so successful? After all, they were not heiresses to an enormous fortune, nor do they have any particular talents. But they have managed to masterfully manipulate the all-important PR machine and thus have become ubiquitous in pop culture. Their colossal success says more about the current state of pop culture than about the Kardashian family. The bottom line is the Kardashian brand sells, and the public has been eating it up. But what exactly are they selling, who are these sultry girls, why is the public so interested in their lives and what does their popularity say about us? Well, who better to answer some of these questions than the outspoken sister of the pack - Khloe Kardashian.

Text **Azzie Mekhitarian** | Photo **Courtesy of E! Entertainment and Kardashian family archives**



The television landscape has changed over the past decade with scripted entertainment being dominated by reality shows. With this new paradigm shift, our understanding of entertainment has been distorted from watching someone's creative vision come to life on television to watching someone's private daily existence displayed for the world. We have become a culture of voyeurs, taking pleasure in watching the mundane exaggerated for the sake of ratings, with each show full of hyper-sexualized, overly-processed personalities that have been spun through the PR machine and spit out as instant celebrities. And although we are far past the point of no return when it comes to reality being twisted into knots and presented as some hybrid type of entertainment, we just can't seem to get enough of the Kardashian girls. When *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* first premiered, it was assumed that it too would have its 15 minutes of fame, make some money and quietly disappear into the abyss of once popular reality shows. No one imagined that seven years later it would become the highest paid reality show with a monumental deal of $40 million, spawn several spin-offs like *Khloe & Lamar* and *Kim & Kourtney Take New York*, and become an empire with popular product lines spread across the world. The Kardashians seem to have mastered the art of keeping the public interested and the much coveted skill of keeping ratings high. They are famous just for being famous. They have truly been a firestorm of unprecedented success, and Khloe Kardashian is at the center of this storm and loving every minute of it. She is known as the say-it-as-you-see-it sister. Viewers seem to respond to her boisterous personality positively and more often than not fans will profess that Khloe is their favorite of the clan. As we chat about fame and the advantages and disadvantage of it, I begin to understand why fans often say they relate most to Khloe. As prepared and scripted as most celebrities are for interviews, Khloe Kardashian comes across as an authentically honest person. "When I first did the show I had no idea anyone was going to like me because I am very blunt and honest or because I have a very big personality. I don't filter myself. I am who I am, and I don't really make apologies for who that is," she says. It appears that her personality comes across so well

on television that viewers have begun to separate Khloe as distinct from the rest of the Kardashians, considering her a bit more real, a bit more like them.

Khloe has managed to navigate her fame in a way that makes sure that she appears glamorous yet down to earth and familiar to many of her fans. She does not fit into the stereotypical image of an unrealistically skinny model-type celebrity. On the contrary, she is considered, for the entertainment world, a big girl. But this big girl who is not shy about talking about her weight was just on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. "I was floored when I was asked to do the cover of *Cosmo*. It really was an honor, especially because most people who are on the cover are a size zero or two. When they asked me I was a little surprised. I'm proud to show off my curves. I'm proud to be who I am and stay true to me. With the pressures of this industry it's so easy to fall into that cycle of going on a crazy diet, lose weight really fast, get plastic surgery or basically eat air and drink water. I'm proud of myself for standing up for real women. " She continues, "I have such a strong family base. Having a strong heritage, I am Armenian, my father always drove into us that family is first and family is everything. I think knowing that, I always knew no matter what, what size I am or how tall I am, I will always have that family unit that will love me."

In fact, Khloe seems to be speaking to the realities of many young women, whether it is about weight and the pressures of fitting into Hollywood's ideal of beauty or about the recently much-publicized issue of being bullied. The way she addresses these issues shows that she is edgy, sharp, provocative and speaks from the heart. "I was bullied my entire life," she recalls, "I was always compared to my sisters. I was a very thin kid but during the O.J. trial years I got much chubbier, and I think that had to do with the stress in my family, being sent back and forth between parents. There was just so much going on, and I was an emotional eater. I was always teased and tormented and it kind of made me have a thick skin."

During the infamous O.J. Simpson trial Khloe was a child, but the lessons of that era have stayed with her into adulthood. Her father, Robert Kardashian, who passed away in 2003, was a close friend and attorney for O.J. Simpson. "When I look back now I would say the one thing I learned would be the foundation of loyalty and true friendship. My father and O.J. went to USC together and they were best friends; they were even roommates at one time. Learning those characteristics about my father that I might not have known because he passed away when I was so young, that's kind of inspiring because that's the kind of person I am. I am loyal until the end, and I really respect that about him," Khloe says. The O.J. Simpson trial really put the Kardashian name onto the public radar. But it was Kim Kardashian's widely viewed

"I'm not saying I moved mountains, but I think that if I have some sort of voice and it's important to me and my culture, I want to help as much as I can," Kardashian says about playing a role Genocide recognition.

video of an intimate moment with her boyfriend that solidified the Kardashian clan as a novelty of posh west coast lifestyle, a novelty that should have passed into oblivion much like other socialites' moments of fame. But the Kardashian's unique looks, not to mention the matriarch's public relations savvy, kept the name in the public long enough for people to find some things to criticize, some things to hate and some things to like about the family. In short, Kris Jenner found a way to keep the public vested in the future of these unconventional beauties. She found a niche market for what they had to offer, the ultimate storyline for a culture of voyeurism – young, exotic, rich and playful women who offered the world a glimpse into the realities of their California lifestyle. The girls represented the epitome of contemporary culture as mixed kids born to an Armenian father and an American mother who grew up in a social circle that was full of very successful and famous people. Although it is clearly Kris Jenner's business sense that has catapulted the Kardashians into reality world fame, Khloe states, "Our business sense started with our father. People definitely perceive us as bratty rich girls, but my dad, from the day that we turned 16, pushed us to get jobs and we had to work on the weekends. We always had curfews; we were never allowed to be out later than 10, maybe 11. If I wanted something and I was under 16, I had to wash the car. We've always had chores, we've always had responsibilities. Kim and I both worked for my dad's company. I was a secretary and I slowly moved up to having other responsibilities and the same with Kim. We've always had jobs. We had a great work ethic, even in the summertime; we were never allowed to sleep in past ten o'clock even if we had nothing to do. Our mother, now that our father is gone, keeps that work ethic. My mom believes in us so much that it makes us believe in ourselves even more. Having your mother as your manager is kind of like a double-edged sword. Of course you fight or bicker more because it's your mother, but definitely no one would believe in us more than our mom does."

By recently devoting an entire episode of *Khloe & Lamar* to the Armenian Genocide, in a span of half an hour, Khloe was able to draw the attention of millions of viewers to the issue of the Armenian



↑
A young Khloe Kardashian with her father, Robert.



←
Khloe age five in a family photo with her father and siblings

↓
Khloe with mother Kris Jenner





↑
News Years 1999, Khloe, Robert Kardashian, Bernadette Leonard, and step father Bruce Jenner

→
Lamar Odom and Khloe on their wedding day, September 27, 2009





↑
First Christmas with Lamar and the Kardashian family

Genocide, garnering responses from Armenians and non-Armenians alike. Clarifying her intentions with that episode she says, "My father was very vocal about it. Even today when an actual event in history is not recognized, the way people do not recognize the Armenian Genocide, it bothers me, and I wanted to do that episode in honor of my father. It was crazy how everything worked out. My husband, Lamar, was offered to play in Turkey, and I understand that the Turkish people of today had nothing to do with it, but still no one is speaking up, and I really had to speak up and give him my concerns. I am a proud Armenian, and I don't want people to think that because Lamar is playing for a Turkish team that I am going against my heritage. I'm really proud that I did it. I did teach a lot of people. People were saying they had never heard about an Armenian Genocide and because of the show they learned about it. I even heard, via Twitter, that the following week some schools were actually teaching some of their classes about the Armenian Genocide because so many of the students were asking about it. I'm not saying I moved mountains, but I think that if I have some sort of voice and it's important to me and my culture, I want to help as much as I can." With an average of 2.5 million viewers, over seven million Twitter followers and six million Facebook fans, Khloe Kardashian may have moved a great number of people by her episode devoted to the Armenian Genocide. The Kardashians are often criticized for how they became famous, questioned about why they are famous and judged with a harshness reserved for tabloids, but it is clear that they have brought with them, on this ride of a lifetime, their pride in their Armenian heritage and a determination to prove critics and doubters wrong. Recently, Khloe made some comments about modern womanhood that had talk show hosts in a frenzy about the role of a modern wife. Khloe moved with her husband, NBA star Lamar Odom, to Dallas when he was unexpectedly traded to the Mavericks. Many questioned her decision to give up her highly successful life in California to support Lamar's career. Her response was that she is a modern woman, and

> "We are not promoting a perfect family, we're just promoting who we are. We stay true to us and I think people respect that, and they can tell the difference between us in our honesty and watching, maybe, some other shows."

she supports her husband. The blogosphere and talk shows lit up with comments about the absurdity of a modern woman giving up her lifestyle to follow her husband's career. When I asked her about this she was clearly ready to answer. "I hold my marriage incredibly high, family to me is number one and will always be number one, and it was never a question; wherever Lamar goes, I am his wife and I will support him. It's just something that is embedded in me." Citing her heritage as a defining factor in her understanding of family and values she continues, explaining, "Those types of things aren't questioned, it's just what you do. Like, I cook for my husband every night. That's not a question, it's just something I do. You just make time for it." Without putting much thought into this simple answer, she has redefined who the modern American woman is for popular culture. It has shaken the notion that pop culture is averse to traditional roles and allows for a more lenient understanding of what is considered modern. It may sound like an overstatement, but talk show hosts were fiercely debating the merits of Khloe's comments on modern womanhood and as is common for talk shows, building an artificial narrative – the false dichotomy of either being ultra cold and modern or ultra suffocated and traditional. It put Khloe on the defensive, explaining her support for her husband.
Recently, the couple moved back to California where Lamar will be playing for the team he was originally drafted by, the Los Angeles Clippers.
Everybody knows that with fame comes a price. To be constantly judged and criticized can take a toll on even the strongest individual. Khloe has had her share of this twisted part of fame as her husband has been the target of harsh criticisms about his less than stellar basketball season. Lamar Odom's career seemed to be derailed by his reality star-filled life. His performance on the court suffered, and many blamed his life with wife Khloe and the constant presence of camera crews. Khloe is quick to defend her husband. "People like to speculate about anything. Lamar was filming *Keeping up with the Kardashians* and *Khloe & Lamar* season one when he won his first two championships for the Lakers, as well as the first to be awarded Sixth Man of the Year in team history. So he did all that while he was filming. Everybody's entitled to a bad season." Staying away from the barrage of negativity has become a norm for Khloe, who avoids reading tabloids and hearing the gossip about her life. The couple made the decision to not sign on for a third season of their highly successful show *Kloe & Lamar*. Khloe will still be filming *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, working on the Sears Kardashian Kollection and will, in collaboration with Lamar, launch a limited edition fragrance for the holiday season called *Untouchable Joy*. "It's such a blessing that we are able to have this journey together," she says. "We are always appreciative; I think our father instilled that in us. You have to be appreciative

Building an Empire

▸ *Keeping Up With the Kardahsians* first aired in 2007. According to Neilson ratings, it averages over 3 million viewers per episode.

▸ It has lead to numerous spin-offs including *Khloe & Lamar*, *Kourtney & Kim Take New York*, *Khloe & Kim Take Miami*, and *The Spin Crowd*. There is another possible spin-off focusing on the two younger sisters, Kendell Jenner and Kylie Jenner, whose personal blogs and modeling careers have increased their popularity along with their chances of getting their own show. In 2012, the family signed a record-breaking $40 million deal with E! for three more seasons of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*.

▸ *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* and its spin-offs consistently lead to record numbers of viewers for E!. The network brought in a record-breaking 10.5 million viewers for Kim's wedding special. The season two finale of *Kourtney & Kim Take New York* drew 4.5 million viewers, E!'s third most-watched show in history.

▸ *Khloe & Lamar* premiered with 2.5 million viewers and remained a ratings favorite for E!.

▸ Khloe, Kourtney and Kim's book, *Kardashian Konfidential* debuted at number four on the *New York Times* Bestseller list.

▸ Their Kardashian Kollection hit 400 Sears stores earlier this year.

▸ The Kardashian's have a list of over 30 products to their names; including skin care products, nail polish, their own designer bathing suit line, clothes, sunless tanning products, shoes, perfumes and workout videos. Kim made *Forbes Magazine*'s "The World's Most Powerful Celebrities" list at number seven with $18 million.

▸ Kim is paid as much as $50,000 per appearance. In 2009 she was paid $25,000 per hour to party at Tao nightclub in Las Vegas. It is rumored that the family was paid $600,000 to host a 2012 New Year's Eve party at Tao.

▸ The Kardashians consistently grace the covers of hundreds of magazines, making many of the publications' top-sellers lists. The Kardashian name is searched over nine million times per month on Google.

▸ *Forbes Magazine* named Khloe the Queen of Social Networking for her constant updates. She has over seven million Twitter followers and over six million Facebook friends.



because everything can stop in a blink of an eye." The monumental sensation of the Kardashian brand is telling about what piques the interests of modern society. The Kardashian reality, their popularity and personas, have blurred the line between what is attainable for the average viewer. It is in this grey area that the Kardashians have built their empire. From the moment the public had a vested interest in them, whether that interest included wishing they would fail, watching their lives unfold in front of the world, or taking fashion cues from them, in that moment the Kardashians became a pop culture phenomenon, perhaps saying more about the state of popular culture than about themselves. "As of now, it's just a way of life and as long as we are blessed enough to have people who want to watch our show, we are having fun, and until it's not fun anymore we don't want to stop," she explains. It is undeniable that the Kardashians have become a brand that sells everything from television shows to nail polish. Every move they make, every place they eat, every outfit they wear suddenly becomes a craze. Executives and product managers are aware of the Kardashian value and are willing to pay hefty sums to tie the name to their products. The money seems to flow with every move they make. Perhaps you can contest the social value of the Kardashians' success, question the reason for their fame, judge their apparent lack of talent, but their popularity and their monetary value cannot be contested. And if in modern society we judge the significance of something by its monetary value, then the Kardashians have most definitely proven they are very significant. ■

broadcaster — հաղորդավար [ha-ghor-ta-var]

Television Personalities

Did you ever wonder how many professionals of Armenian descent work in major television networks around the world? Our very eclectic list includes highly talented and educated TV personalities who work in all genres from news broadcasting, investigative journalism, talk-show hosting and acting, to writing and directing in a variety of national and international TV networks globally.



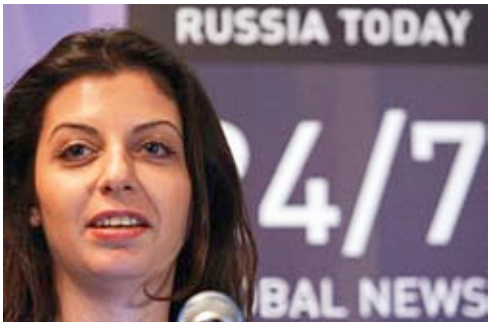
Lara Setrakian (USA)
She was named a 2012 Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum's YGL group and is the second most followed Bloomberg personality on Twitter. Lara Setrakian is a Dubai-based reporter for Bloomberg Television and ABC News. An experienced international correspondent, Setrakian covers markets, government, finance, business and world events from the Middle East. She has interviewed numerous regional leaders and led the network's coverage of the Arab uprisings in the spring of 2011. Setrakian reported live from Tahrir Square as President Hosni Mubarak ended his rule. In addition to headlining Bloomberg Television's coverage from the Middle East, Lara contributes to *Monocle Magazine*, *Foreign Policy* and *Business Insider.* While covering the rise of piracy off the horn of Africa, Lara was the first American to interview the new president of war-torn Somalia. Before moving to the Middle East, Setrakian was a reporter with ABC News' *Law & Justice Unit*. There she covered high-profile trials and cases as well as other exclusive stories.



Janet Shamlian (USA)
Shamlian can be seen on any number of NBC programs from the *Nightly News* with Brian Williams to the *Today Show, Dateline* and news programs on MSNBC and CNBC. Janet Shamlian joined the NBC network in 2005 and has covered a variety of national and international stories including the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Fort Hood shooting, Hurricane Katrina, and the July 7, 2005 London bombings. In 2007, Shamlian conducted the first evening network broadcast interview with Michelle Obama. Prior to joining NBC News, Shamlian worked as an anchor and reporter at WBBM-TV, the CBS affiliate in Chicago. She has also worked as a reporter and anchor for KHOU-TV and KPRC-TV, both in Houston. A native of Park Ridge, Illinois, Shamlian attended the University of Missouri School of Journalism to study broadcast journalism, one of the very few public universities in the U.S. that owns a television station, in this case the NBC affiliate, KOMU-TV. Janet Shamlian is a recepient of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator's* Award of Excellence.



Patrick Masbourian (Canada)
Canadian director and coordinator Patrick Masbourian began his television career while participating in *La Course Destination Monde*, a transmission of the Télévision de Radio-Canada to give a chance to young reporters and cameramen to prepare international reports. Masbourian won third prize for the 1990-1991 season in the competition Europe-Asia. He joined the Marc Labrèche program *La Fin du monde est à 7 heures* in 1997 and continued to co-host until 2000 when he became presenter of *La revanche des Nerdz*, a daily program on Z-Télé until 2006. In 2004, he participated in the Armenian Genocide documentary *My Son Shall Be Armenian.* In summer 2006, Masbourian began his work on the morning show of Radio-Canada's first channel called *Pour la Suite des Choses*. In spring 2007, he presented *Radiomonde* in collaboration with Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). During the summer of 2011, he presented PM on Radio-Canada. Masbourian is now working on personal projects related to cinema, and continues filing reports in Flash.



Margarita Simonyan (Russia)
Russia's first and main English language TV channel is headed by an Armenian. Born in Russia, Simonyan is the Editor-in-Chief of *Russia Today.* Following the launch of RT in Arabic and Spanish, she was named Editor-in-Chief of the global multilingual television news network RT, broadcasting from studios in Moscow and Washington to audiences all over the world. Simonyan took the position in 2005 when she was only 25 years-old, and as claimed by *Passport* magazine, "in the world today, she is the youngest head of a global news and entertainment TV channel." Simonyan started her journalistic career in her native town of Krasnodar at the age of 18 after spending a year as a student in Bristol, New Hampshire. Later she earned her university degree, combining her studies with field journalism. During her career with the state TV channel Rossiya starting in 2001, she reported from Chechnya during the Second Chechen Campaign, from the Beslan School siege and from Abkhazia. Simonyan has received several awards for journalism. She is the first Vice-President of the National Association of TV and Radio Broadcasters (NAT) and a member of the Public Chamber of Russia.



Garik Martirosyan (Russia)
Entertainer, host, comedian, actor and singer – Garik Martirosyan is very famous in Russia. He is one of four hosts of the very popular *Prozhektorperiskhilton* (Projector Paris Hilton) show, which has broadcast on Channel One since 2008. Martirosyan is also the co-founder, co-producer and host of *Comedy Club Russia*, which airs on the TNT channel. Since its inception, Martirosyan has participated in almost all editions of the comedy program. Meanwhile, Martirosyan hosted the first two seasons of *Minuta Slavy* on Channel One, which is the Russian version of *America's Got Talent*. Martirosyan is the creator and co-author of *Our Russia* show on TNT. From 1993 to 2002 Martirosyan was first a member and later captain of the *New Armenians* team on the Russian comedy TV show and KVN Club of the *Funny and Inventive*, where teams compete by giving funny answers to questions and showing prepared comedy acts.



George Donikian (Australia)
George Donikian has been a media stalwart throughout his career of 40 years. Beginning in radio, he soon progressed to anchor the first critically acclaimed SBS World News for eight and a half years. His television career began in 1980, when a chance meeting with then TV guru Bruce Gyngell, saw George installed as the face of multiculturalism in Australia's revolutionary new TV station Channel 0 which quickly evolved into SBS. Donikian was the anchor in the inaugural World News Service in Melbourne and Sydney. In late 1988, George Donikian left SBS to join the Nine Network (Australia) which gave him the opportunity to work with television legend Graham Kennedy on the Coast to Coast program. During his stint at Nine, George also hosted a number of talk-back stints on radio station 2GB. Donikian was part of the commentary team during the 1988 State of Origin Rugby League series, as well as the Test Series between England and Australia.

Daniel Bilalian (France)
Since 2004, Daniel Bilalian has been director of sports at France Télévisions. A former student at the University of Lille, Bilalian began his career in 1968 as a reporter on the Rheims daily paper *L'Union*, where he worked until 1971. After joining the French broadcasting corporation ORTF in 1971, he worked as a journalist first at the Rheims office and then in the Lille office, and was a journalist for the foreign politics department of the second TV channel of the ORTF. Employed as a senior reporter in the foreign politics department at Antenne 2 from 1975 to August 1981, he was the anchor of the news bulletin. After presenting news flashes and special editions during the Gulf War on Antenne 2, he co-produced and hosted the weekly debate programme *Mardi Soir*. Daniel Bilalian was also the host of the program *Elysée/Matignon* on BFM.





Sallie Aprahamian (United Kingdom)
Sallie Aprahamian is one of England's most gifted television directors. Her body of work includes many critically acclaimed shows including: *Extremely Dangerous* (Picture Palace/NW Films) starring Sean Bean; BAFTA-nominated *The Sins* (BBC); *The Lakes* (Company Pictures); *Teachers* (Tiger Aspect); and *This Life* (World Productions). She has collaborated with a wide range of writers – including Jeremy Brock, Frank Deasy and Billy Ivory. Prior to her success in television, she directed over 30 new productions of theatrical works for various theater companies. She developed and directed the critically acclaimed *Blue Night in the Heart of the West* by James Stock, which won the George Devine Award. Broken Lines is Sallie's feature film debut.

Nouritza Matossian (Cyprus)
A British Cypriot of Armenian descent, Nouritza Matossian is a broadcaster, writer and actress. Her expertise in writing includes a variety of topics – arts, contemporary music, history and Armenia. Matossian broadcasts on the BBC and contributes to several newspapers and magazines including *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, and *The Observer*. She published the first biography and critical study of the Greek composer Iannis Xenakis and later adapted it into a 50-minute documentary for BBC2, entitled *Something Rich and Strange*. Matossian's 1998 book, *Black Angel*, the Life of Arshile Gorky was written after twenty years' research. *Ararat*, the award-winning film by Atom Egoyan was partly inspired by the *Black Angel*. She acted as a consultant to Egoyan, who modeled the female lead role of Ani on her.





Nelly Kalfayan (Egypt)
Nelly Artin Kalfayan, better known as Nelly, is an Egyptian television personality, comedian, actress, singer, dancer and entertainer. From her large repertory of artistic works, Nelly is best known throughout the Arab world for her *Fawazir Ramadan*, which translates as Ramadan Puzzles. This is a set of TV comedy shows mixed with general entertainment segments that were broadcast to dozens of major television stations throughout the Arab world on a daily basis during the holy month of Ramadan. Each year's *Fawazir* series was organized around a different theme from 1980 to 1996. Next, Nelly did a show called *Alf Leila Wa Leila* in 2001. In recent years, Nelly has largely retired from making films and comedy shows, but she has been visible as a guest personality on a number of TV talk and entertainment programs.

Unfortunately, due to language and geographic barriers, not all of us are able to enjoy the mastery and work of the TV professionals on this list. However, just the mere listing of their accomplishments in an important, highly competitive and demanding field inspires and motivates.



ARMENIAN TV

A FRIEND OR A CULPRIT?

For many of us, TV programming in Armenian is an essential focal point of our home space. For those who don't speak the language of the host country, it's a window to the world and a nostalgic time machine; for the younger generation, it could become an educational tool or a vehicle for strengthening their cultural identity. But for the experienced and well-known journalists Arshalous Darbinyan, Stepan Partamian, and Dr. Manoug Seraydarian the problems of Armenian television are daily, and at times, painful aspects of their professional life.

Facilitator **Nane Avagyan** | Photo **Tigran Tovmasyan**

Nane: Television connects us because it provides an outlet for Armenian themes and news, and it separates, because often one group does not accept the views of the other, and that could create antagonism. I often think about the significance and the role of ethnic television.

Arshalous: Ethnic media is the voice of the community. It promotes the image and reflects various needs of the Diaspora. People are fully informed about current issues in their own language. Ethnic media is also a fusion of multiculturalism and American identity. We rely on it to promote a positive image of Armenians.

Stepan: In today's society media is the most important tool for social education; therefore, the ethnic media is important in educating the individual about his or her own identity and for others to become educated in the culture of that particular ethnic group.

Manoug: But I think that there is no such thing as "ethnic media". There might be media that centers on certain ethnic issues. The importance of this kind of media lies in the fact that it connects the given ethnic community to its cultural and historic roots, keeping those roots alive and nourishing them.

Nane: You're right, however, what's interesting and important for one group of viewers is a turn off for the other. I wonder if there are common themes that can unite generations of Armenians all over the world at all.

Manoug: Exactly. Armenians around the world have several different political and psychological approaches toward the matters of interest according to their age groups, locations and origins. What might unite them could be the Armenian cultural wealth inherited through the ages.

Stepan: Culture, and only our unique Armenian culture void of other influences, can unite generations of Armenians all over the world,



Arshalous Darbinyan
TV personality, newscaster,
Los Angeles, California



Stepan Partamian,
"The Armenian"
A talk show host in Glendale, California. Stepan Partamian is the author of the book *Yes, We Have*, dedicated to the contributions made by Armenian Americans.

but the irony is that each Armenian from different parts of the world thinks that his adoptive land's culture is the right one. The truth is that even Armenia's popular culture in the 21st century is not pure Armenian, so we need to be very careful of not introducing what we like, but instead introduce what belongs to us – which is Armenian.

Arshalous: Common themes on TV that can unite the generations of Armenians are documentaries on renowned and successful Armenians worldwide and anything that makes you proud of your Armenian heritage.

Nane: With today's financial challenges that many Armenian networks are facing, we are still an important mechanism of uniting the Diaspora communities. But at times, as a professional, it is hard not to get discouraged.

Stepan: Armenian news is not important because Armenia and the Armenian news do not interest anyone but Armenians. We, Armenians, have not left our kitchens yet and have not infiltrated humanity's mind yet.

Arshalous: Television is considered to be the most effective means of communication, and news production is the backbone of live television. To keep up with the heartbeat of the community, the Diaspora as a whole must understand the real importance of different viewpoints. News delivered in Armenian can only boost the multicultural marketing.

Manoug: News should be broadcast throughout the entire Armenian Diaspora, period.

Nane: Somehow, the Armenian soap operas are on the rise. Seemingly, they follow the global trend of criminal drama serials, but I noticed one distinction. Usually, in the foreign serials the story plot is driven by an antagonism between the criminals and those who eventually bring the criminal groups to justice. However, it seems that in the Armenian serials, the bad guys usually dominate.

Manoug: The only role these soap operas play is catastrophe. What we see and who we see in those soap operas is not what we are or who we are!

Arshalous: Soap operas – not my favorite genre. Generally, soap operas are defined by a continuous narrative. Armenian soap operas, on the other hand, have no storyline and no further development. The awkward scenes, clichéd plots and situations, jargon and vulgarism within present-day Armenian soap operas can play a negative role in child and family development. I believe producers should be held accountable.



Stepan: Television could be the most important educational tool in the development of an individual; unfortunately the level of intellect among the majority of Armenians is so pathetically low that these Armenian soap operas are destroying the next generation of Armenians.

Nane: Television channels as an ethnic media outlet need to improve and change, just like everything else. But what direction to take and where to start?

Manoug: How about diversity? We need more cultural programs, more balanced news, and more programs that enrich our culture and moral values.

Stepan: We cannot change anything since we Armenians follow international programming; we are just copying what they want us to present.

Arshalous: Perhaps censorship will help to prevent exposing violence, do away with false information and unreliable ads and, most importantly, safeguard children. In my opinion, without censorship TV can do more harm. In moderation, censorship could make a difference.

Manoug: Censorship is needed on TV to a degree that keeps everything within the limits of Armenian moral and family values.

Stepan: For an educated individual, freedom is a gift; for the uneducated – it is a tragedy. We, Armenians, are uneducated in social behavior; therefore, we do not need censorship on Armenian TV, but need to learn how to present the notion of social responsibility. Since ratings dictate the importance of programs, the TV channels are just like any other business whose interest is money and not national interests, and so they will not sacrifice anything. What genocide could not do to Armenians, "culturecide" will do, and on the forefront of the guilty list are the Armenian TV stations.

Nane: Considering the difficult financial times, perhaps it's hard to sacrifice a drop in ratings for quality TV programming.

Arshalous: It's a fact that the reality TV fan base, adult content and language help TV channels earn more profits and higher ratings. Nevertheless, TV executives should revisit their priorities for better programming.

Manoug: I think the TV companies can scarify the ratings for quality, if needed.

Arshalous: First and foremost, let's take it seriously. Think before you act. Armenian TV needs more useful programs, less infomercials, more or less anything that is essential to life. Education and discipline must put us on the correct path. ■



The Best of Both Worlds

It's been 17 years since Eliz Gazarian-Semerjian, the Director of National Sales at Telemundo, started her career, having worked her way up from her start as a model and production assistant. I met this bright and energetic woman at the AIWA conference, where her effortless professionalism, personal warmth and gracious femininity made a great impression on all she met. It was only natural that while working on our Television issue, *Yerevan* decided to share the story of her career in one of the largest Hispanic television networks in North America.

Text **Lianna Zakharian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan** | Photo Assistant **Angela Mikaelyan**

Her origin is an interesting conversation piece in itself. Eliz is from Venezuela, but of Armenian descent. Thanks to her mother's persistence, Eliz and her brother Haik spoke Armenian and were raised in the Armenian community in Venezuela. Their grandfather, uncles and their extended family were among the founders of the first Armenian Church in Venezuela. After immigrating to the U.S., Eliz attended college and embarked on chasing her American dream. Tall, slim and attractive, Eliz Gazarian quickly caught the attention of modeling agencies. She had the good looks required of a model, but, "standing still was not in my nature, I would always turn my head around, curious to see what was going on in the production division." That interest led her to the first meaningful step on her career path in television. Gazarian-Semerjian started working for Telemundo news and various live productions. At the time, the company was owned by General Electric.

The most memorable encounter in her career was with the powerful and influential president of the GE, Jack Welch. "I was very nervous before the meeting," she said, "He had a very strong handshake; I almost felt my finger bones cracking. And also – his piercing look, straight into one's eyes. But physically, he was not tall or imposing. When Welch started talking, to my surprise, he was stuttering. He liked my Spanish accent and asked me where I was from. At the end of our conversation he said, 'You are going to have a great future in this company,' and then he repeated, 'a great future.' I thought then, 'If he could achieve so much from a humble beginning, I should aim high too,'" an affirmation which helped Eliz as she continued working through the ranks at Telemundo. She traveled a lot on business, and as fate would have it, Eliz met the love of her life on a special encounter. "It is strange, but the first time I met my husband while travelling on business to Miami," she recalled. "We both lived in Los Angeles, we were Armenians from Venezuela and we worked in the same building in downtown LA. What are the chances of that happening to me? To anyone? From the moment I met him, I knew that he was the man for me. We got married and I understood that if I wanted to raise children, I needed to change careers. Being in production means working odd hours, so I accepted a position in sales and marketing. Now I have two children, a boy and a girl, ages 9 and 13. They attend an Armenian private school where I am an active mom and I couldn't be happier. I made the right choice for me and my family."

I asked Eliz if she missed the action in the production division. "I love my job in sales. I have a lot to do during my workday and we have a great team. There are so many opportunities out there, considering the US Hispanic market is the second largest Hispanic speaking market with 1 trillion dollars in buying power. I get to be a part of that growth and that excites me."

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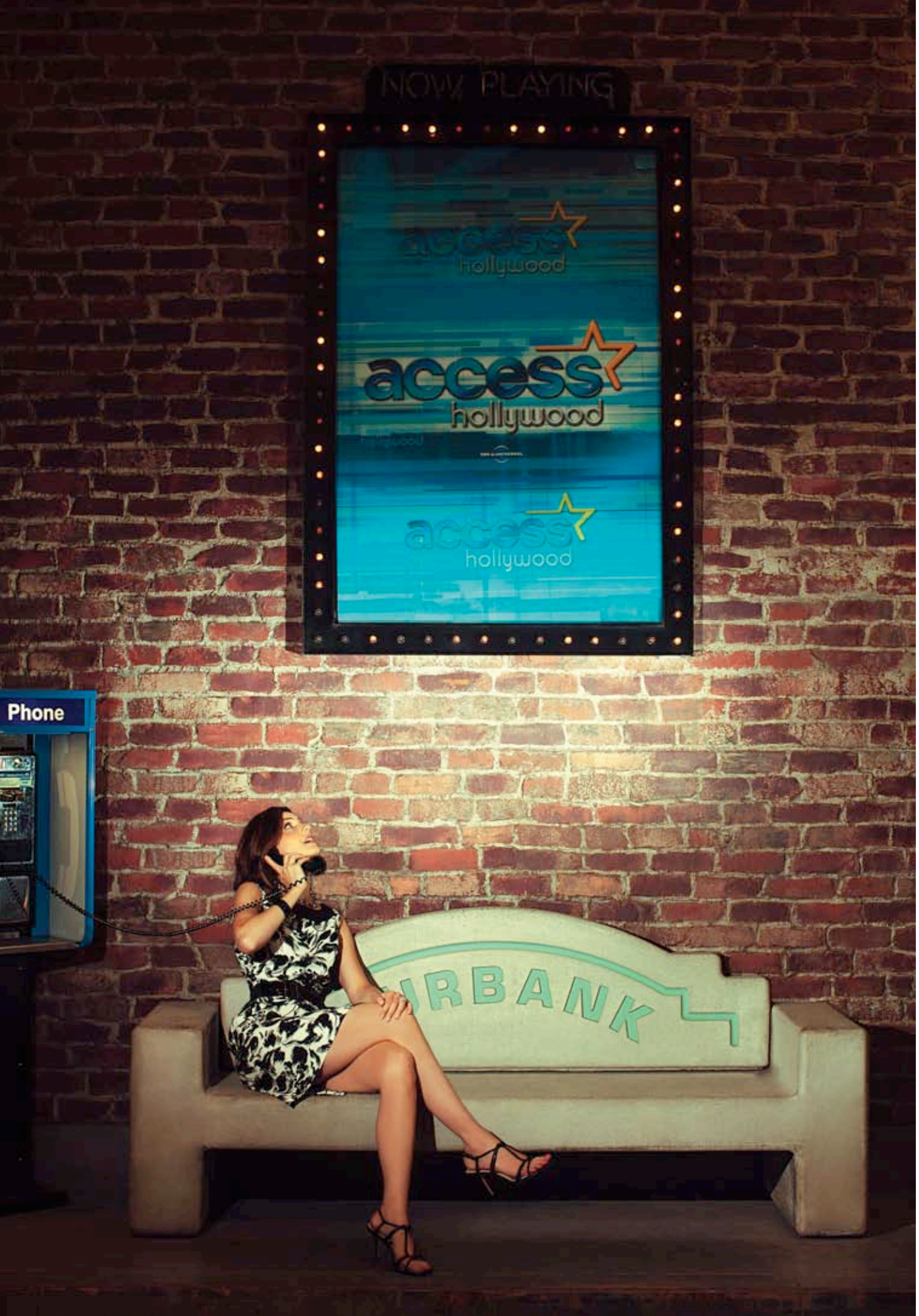
"What types of companies are your main clients?" I asked.

"Our biggest clients are the automotive companies like Honda and Toyota, and large corporations like McDonalds, Target, Verizon Wireless, etc. It takes more time and research to present our product – Telemundo – to these mainstream clients. You have to prove that your target consumer population has strong potential. Not all clients are receptive and open to the ethnic media market, but a positive shift in that direction is obvious. We make a great effort to reach as many large companies as possible. In this economy, seeing companies thrive with the help of the Telemundo family consisting of research, planning and the sales team makes it all worth it."

Obviously, the Telemundo ads are different than those of the NBC, as they are geared towards the interests and tastes of the viewers of Telemundo. Gazarian-Semerjian agrees and continues, "Not only ads, but the coverage of the same events is done differently. For example, we had a huge coverage of the Olympic Games in London which was the biggest ever in the history of the event, particularly with U.S. Spanish-language rights holder Telemundo, which aired more than 173 hours of Olympics coverage, NBCUniversal's most extensive Spanish-language Olympics coverage ever." The network had two sites dedicated to the Games. OlimpiadasTelemundo.com was mainly focused on the sports aspect, while DeportesTelemundo.com offered a different perspective at the Games, with more news, analysis, color stories and profiles of athletes, particularly those of Hispanic origin. Telemundo had been pushing the Olympics for months with a series of branded segments embedded into local programming. One of these segments was called "Momentos Históricos," which allowed Telemundo to tap into the vast NBCU Olympics archives for segments on memorable moments from the Games, many – but not all – featuring Hispanic athletes. In addition, this time the company had a huge job covering more than 200 hours of digital videos, along with social media efforts via Twitter and Facebook. "These Olympic Games were the most digital in the event's history," explained Gazarian-Semerjian, adding that the trend will definitely continue. "Nowadays people watch more than just TV. They are on social networks and the internet. That presents advertisers and sponsors even more opportunities to reach viewers," she continued, which led us to a question about the future of TV advertising." ▸

"You have to prove that your target consumer has strong potential – not all advertising clients are open to the ethnic media market," Gazarian says.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An Ever Evolving Brand

The original vision to inspire, empower and entertain Hispanics in the U.S. and audiences around the world belonged to Angel Ramos, owner of El Mundo, Puerto Rico's main newspaper at the time, and Puerto Rico's first radio station, WKAQ, founded in 1954, and the first Telemundo station. In 1998, Telemundo was bought by a partnership between cable's Liberty Media and conglomerate Sony Pictures Entertainment. On April 12, 2002, Telemundo was purchased by NBC for $2.7 billion and is now a part of NBCUniversal. In 2004, Telemundo created Telemundo Television Studios in Miami. Under NBC, Telemundo gave greater emphasis to original programming and product placement. The network was spending $100 million a year producing its own shows. After it was purchased by NBCUniversal, Telemundo decided to stop importing telenovelas from Latin America and to start producing its own. On January 28, 2011, Comcast completed its $6.5 billion dollar acquisition of a 51% majority stake in NBC Universal, acquiring control of Telemundo as part of the deal.

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The current trend among TV viewers is to use services from internet-based companies that offer vast uninterrupted by commercials video archives along with live streaming for a relatively small monthly fee. "Quite understandably, that is not supportive to our business," smiles Gazarian-Semerjian. "Therefore, our general strategy is to follow the target audience wherever they are, and I am sure we will adjust and redirect our efforts in any direction it would be needed in the future, always trying to come up with the most comprehensive plan across various media platforms, including video-on-demand for mobile devices, www.telemundo.com and www.mun2.tv. TV programming and production require serious investments, which are generated by advertisement and marketing." I asked about the general strategy of approaching clients. "Once there's some sort of interest, we come in and talk specifics about Telemundo and our 360 degree offerings. Our conversations are based on facts generated by our marketing research departments. For some smaller clients, we're able to engage into a more personal dialogue."

Telemundo's 173 hours of coverage was NBCUniversal's most extensive Spanish-language Olympics coverage ever.

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I am puzzled by the phenomenon of telenovelas which is a big production part at Telemundo. How could these unpretentious and often predictable stories be so successful? "What's the secret of such international popularity of telenovelas?" I asked Gazarian-Semerjian. "In a sense, for a lot of viewers it is an escape from reality," she said and continued, "Originally, the story lines often followed the plot somewhat resembling a Cinderella story of a young beautiful girl who marries her prince at the end. Nowadays, increasingly the medium has been used to transmit socio-cultural messages by incorporating them into storylines. Also, Telemundo successfully has been pushing the envelope with edgier novellas. For example, La Reina del Sur garnered an Emmy nomination and became the network's highest rated premiere for a telenovela to date."

Gazarian-Semerjian, is not a stranger to cinema – her brother, Haik Gazarian being a recognized film director who shares his time between Colombia, Los Angeles, and wherever else his work path leads him. Eliz proudly shares, "Haik is working on his next film following his film Venezzia – set in Venezuela in the midst of World War II. Venezzia became the most successful film in the recent history of Venezuelan cinematography."

"I see that you are a very loving mother, wife and sister," I told Eliz, "but what kind of a boss are you, the dictatorial or democratic type?" "I am not a dictator at all," she replied, "We are like a close-knit family here at Telemundo. But when needed, I can be very firm."

She pointed at the several staff photos on the cabinet wall and invited me outside to meet her co-workers.

Eliz accompanied me further in a tour around the production studios which Telemundo shares with the NBC. Outside the entrance door we pass through a small crowd of music fans with self-made posters. "Who's here today?" asked Eliz and they pointed to the pop group name on the posters. "102.7 KIIS FM radio is one level above us, Ryan Seacrest and the guys often have stars over," explained Gazarian-Semerjian as we continue to the production building. At the entrance we were greeted by two young interns, television broadcasting students from Mexico, who showed us around. We peeked into the large empty studio of the legendary Johnny Carson Show, took snapshots at the news anchor's desk and Extra host stand, pretended to report on weather by the green screen, touched the first ever remote-controlled studio cameras used at NBC, smiled at Jay Leno's huge mural and took photos by the London Olympic Games backdrop. Next, we passed through the busiest place, the huge NBC newsroom. "You should see the action when there's breaking news. Everything gets in motion and you hear 'Breaking news! Breaking news!' from every corner. I missed that kind of action..." she sighed and continued, "Next year we all move to the Universal lot, and this building might be demolished. However a group of citizens filed petition for its preservation – there is so much history within these walls."

Our interview and the tour were over. On our way back we continued to discuss the development of ethnic television and its role in entertaining, but also, in supporting language, education, family values and cultivating democracy by informing communities. After all, hardly anyone could deny the fact that knowledge of current events and issues can empower the public and help people become actively involved in responsible decision-making as citizens. ■

A Day in the Life of...

Peter Musurlian is a station manager and senior producer at Burbank TV 6, a government access channel run out of Burbank City Hall in California. Musurlian is a hard-hitting multimedia journalist who shoots and narrates his own material. On his free time, he focuses on his other passion as a documentarian. So, what does an average day look like for a 20-year professional with a decorated career? Peter Musurlian takes *Yerevan Magazine* on a full-day ride to let us, and you, know.

Text **Manouk Akopyan** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**



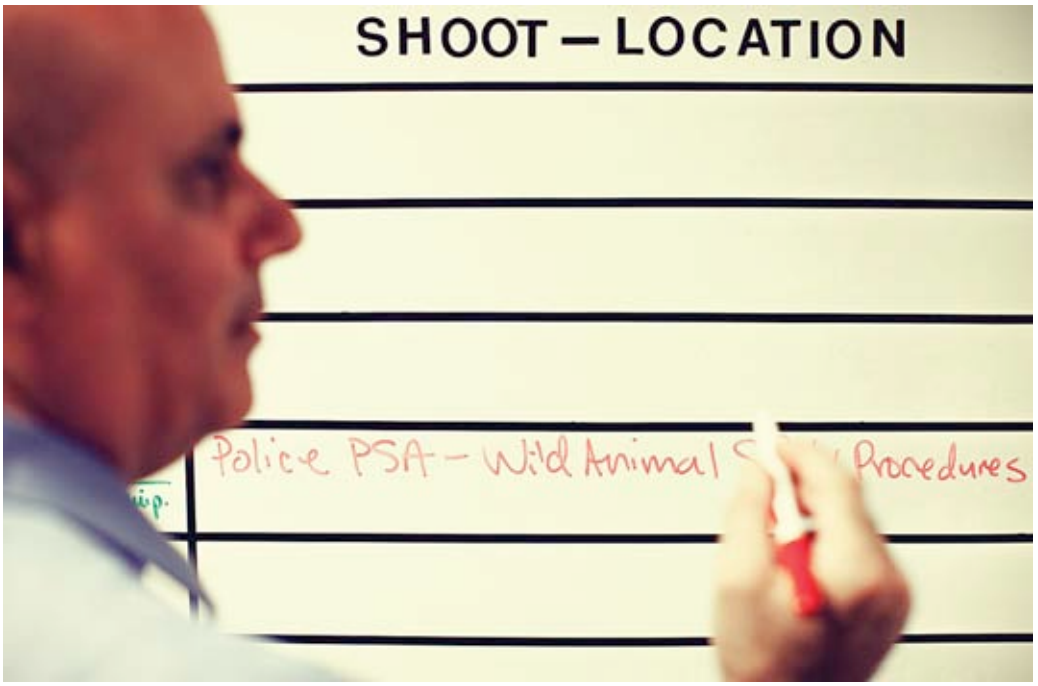
First things first: Peter Musurlian works three days a week. I guess you can negotiate such terms once you have the résumé and pedigree that he does. He has four degrees, three of them masters. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, he works a 12-hour shift from seven in the morning until seven at night. Tuesdays and Thursdays he works from home, usually editing the countless hours of film he has recorded over the years as documentarian for Globalist Films, the independent documentary production company he founded in 2003.



For his soon-to-be-released documentary *Turkey's Tools in the Heartland*, Musurlian sheds light on several political cases in the United States that seem to have Turkish lobbyist fingerprints all over them. In 2008, Musurlian confronted Tennessee Congressman Steve Cohen for actively fighting against the House Resolution for recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Musurlian offered straight-up questions such as, "Are the Turks paying you off?" Cohen had agreed to speak, but then lashed out and pushed Musurlian and his camera away while slamming the door on his face. Then, Musurlian documented Ohio Congresswoman Jean Schmidt's baseless accusations against David Krikorian after discovering that the congresswoman was the recipient of more Turkish-American money than anybody in the country. "No one ever challenged these guys. I saw this unfolding in front of me, and as an Armenian American, I had a great interest in it. I knew, no one was going to ask the hard questions, so I wanted to do that and expose them," Musurlian says.



Not all of Musurlian's work is hard-hitting. *The Long Journey from the NFL to Armenia* documented former college football standout and Tennessee Titans defensive end Rien Long's journey to Armenia – 100 years after his great-grandparents had fled to America during the Armenian massacres. Before he begins on a documentary, the key is to visualize the project, he says, which is why he assigned himself a project for the fun of it. In *Coast-to-Coast Solo Speed Record*, Musurlian set out to break the world record for driving a car from the Atlantic Ocean (departing from Jacksonville) to the Pacific Ocean (arriving in San Diego). While working on BTV6's upcoming production schedule, Musurlian recalls his 37 hour and 14 minute marathon with the exhilaration of a schoolboy. "I have had marathon drives across the country before. In 2004, I read an obituary about Doug Turner, the record holder for the cross-country trip, and I wanted to break it and document the entire process. It was as simple as that." Only if his wife and then two-month-old baby girl June Petra, who joined him for the ride, would agree, of course.

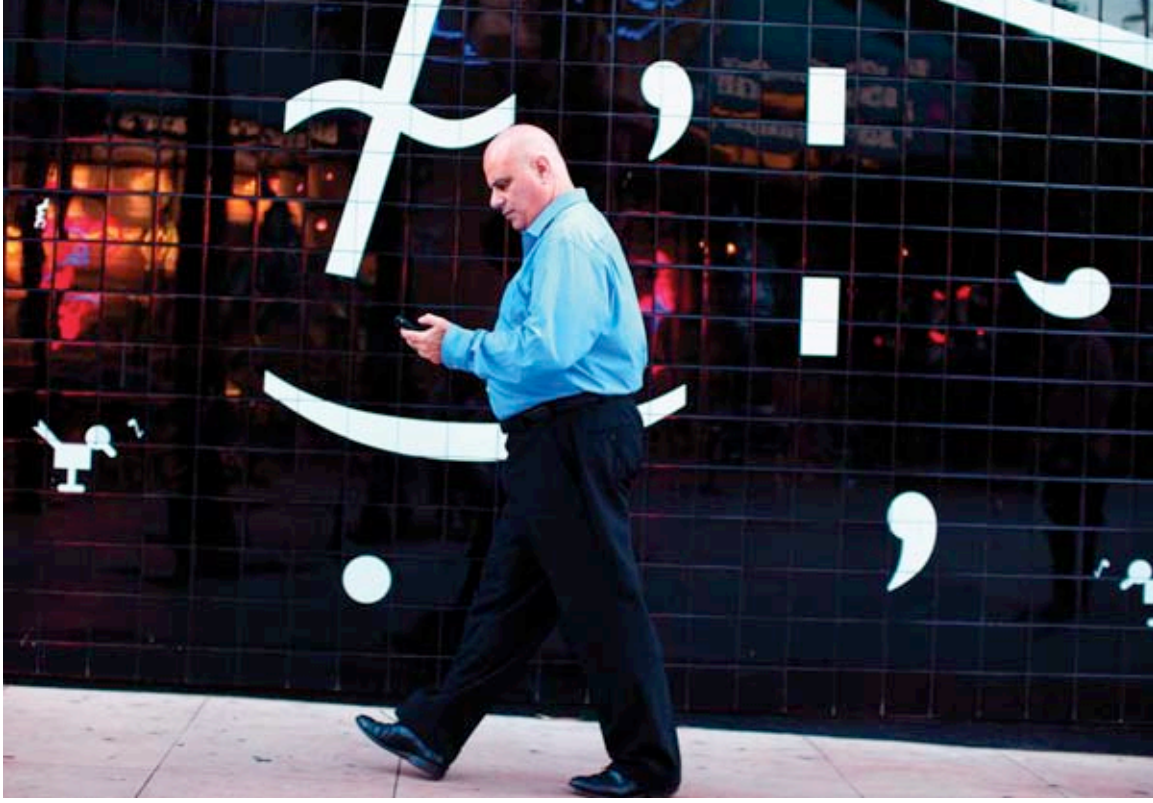




Since he is always shooting, Musurlian prefers walking around with a camera to walking around with a rifle. But his comparison carries actual clout because it comes from a man who was an Army Reservist for six years and walked around with a rifle throughout Hungary, Croatia and Bosnia during an eight-month stretch in 1997-98 while serving as an Army television journalist. His reports – aired worldwide on the American Forces Network – earned him a NATO Medal and an Army Commendation Medal. His life-changing time there also earned him the opportunity of meeting Szilvia Eva Gadanyi, his wife of 14 years. "I wanted to go there and feature our soldiers who were serving our country. I got a better understanding of the people there, and the great people who make up our country. I ended up with so much respect for them. It was a two-thirds cut in my paycheck at the time, but I gladly got to serve my country as well," he says.



Since 2002, Musurlian has won 10 Golden Mike awards from the Radio & Television News Association of Southern California in seven different categories: documentary, videography, editing, serious reporting, business reporting, entertainment reporting, and producing the show *Burbank Magazine*, which he created in 1999. He's also been nominated for six Los Angeles Area Emmys, including two for this year's 64th Annual Awards Show in August. One was for a local story on the Burbank Parade of Roses float, and the other was for an in-depth look at a Europe-based non-profit environmental organization that focuses on national parks in the Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union. Musurlian shot the story *Saving the Wild: The Caucasus Nature Fund* last summer in Armenia and Georgia. "Getting recognition from my peers in the business is great satisfaction. That's the intellectual payoff, especially when you get the feedback. It gives you that warm, fuzzy feeling inside."

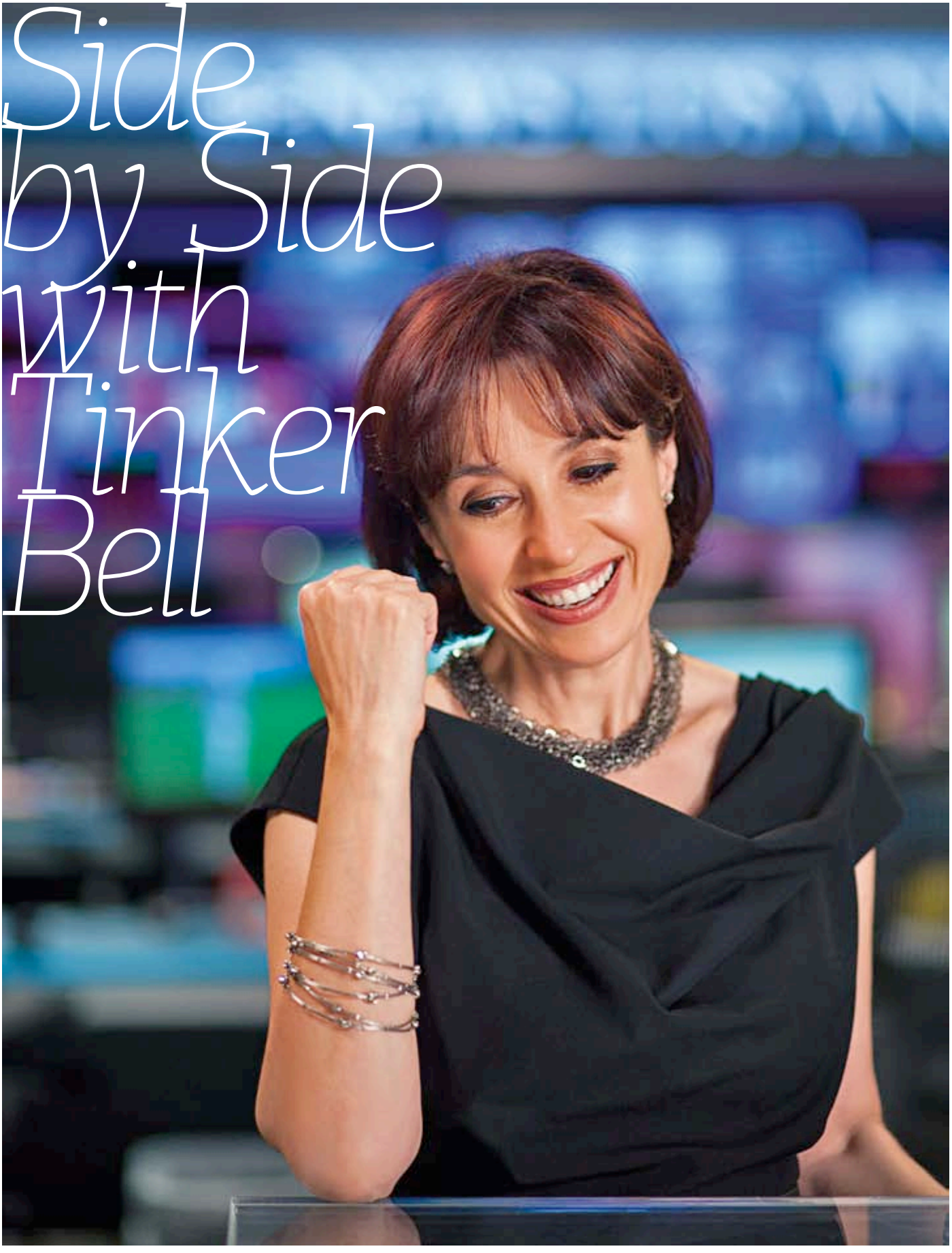


Musurlian's life has constantly been on the go, as he was a globetrotter before permanently settling down in Los Angeles at the turn of this century. Born in Racine, Wisconsin and raised in Torrance, California, upon graduating from USC, Musurlian took his first job in Great Falls, Montana as a reporter and anchor. In the 1980s, Musurlian reported for television stations in Temple, Texas and from Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. After working as a solo television journalist in Central Europe, he spent six years working as a district director for now-retired congressman Carlos Moorhead. "Everyone has their interests in life. People go into journalism for a variety of reasons. I went into it because I love to meet new people, tell their stories in an entertaining and informative way and have viewers find it interesting as well. I also love exposing injustices and hypocrisy – mostly of governmental or elected officials."



I don't know how many people get satisfaction out of their jobs, but I love mine. I'm a curious person, and you have to be such to work in the field of journalism and reporting. My reward is that I have an audience enjoying my product. I've enjoyed both the local and international aspects of my career. But now, I'm more interested in the substantive, and I do that by making documentaries. I love to make documentaries, but I want to do them right. One can spend 48 hours or 48 months on one film. It all depends. It then comes down to finding your audience...and yeah, making a little money won't hurt too." ■

Side by Side with Tinker Bell



From the early morning hours, many of us expect to be informed on what's happening around the world from the television news shows. But did you ever wonder how this magic happens? How the newscasts are run and operated? How TV crews appear on location around the country? Diane Benneian is a true insider in the finance division of ABC News. For years, she would fly, almost like a fairy, to wherever there was a need to prepare and ensure the smooth workflow for ABC News West Coast's *Good Morning America* team.

Text **Lianna Zakharian** | Photo **Tigran Tovmasyan**

Diane Benneian has been with ABC for 32 years and since 1998, she has been the Manager of Finance and Operations for the Western Bureaus of ABC News. For her magical work, Disney, the parent company of ABC, presented Diane with the very appropriate statuette of Tinker Bell. We sat down with Diane to discuss the nuts and bolts of her trade.

What exactly is involved in your line of work?

The scope of my responsibilities is very wide. We do the logistics and operations for the ABC Bureaus on the West Coast covering fifteen states including greater Los Angeles, Seattle and Dallas areas. Anytime we hire crews, I oversee and approve their expenses, time sheets for labor and equipment rentals, contracts for the crews, travel, insurance, new hire forms and anything else in the office that pertains to financial needs. A variety of components are needed to make it all come together. We support ABC News shows, such as World News, Nightline, This Week, Good Morning America and 20/20. I was offered my current position in 1998 and took the opportunity because I didn't want to travel so much and be away from home. In production, even locally, I was on call 24/7 and could be driving anywhere at a moment's notice. But even now, I never have a dull moment. I never look at the clock.

How did you start working in the television industry?

I started at the bottom at ABC where I worked as a cashier for six months. Then I was hired as a production assistant in the Unit Managers Department. This was the beginning of my production career. We were assigned to any show that ABC was producing including sports and news. From 1982 to 1984, I worked in the Entertainment Division at ABC, particularly on the TV series General Hospital, first as a production assistant, then as the production manager. Of course, it was interesting to see all the actors and actresses in addition to the studio set up with all the lights, cameras, prompter, sets and props. But the most fascinating part for me to see was how after the script was written, everything else was put together. I worked very long hours spending the biggest part of the day in the control room. I managed the expenses and was basically helping to set up crew sheets, hotel rooms, and car rentals when they went on the road and covered the sport events. One year they decided to take me to a PGA tour event in Monterey. It was my first time, so I went there with my briefcase, wearing a dress suit and high heels, thinking I would look so professional. When I arrived, everyone at the offices in the trailers was wearing comfortable attire – jeans, t-shirts, and tennis shoes, because apparently that's what you do when you are on the road. Imagine my embarrassment!

Later on you worked on many significant special projects as well...

At 24, I worked on the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. I stayed for a month at the Bonaventure Hotel, being assigned to the opening and closing ceremonies and the triathlon. I also worked on the Academy Awards for eight seasons, doing the pre-production and post-production tapes. These were all the clips and scenes that were shown during the Academy Awards. ▸

"How we do business hasn't changed much, except we are doing it with lot less people. We don't take time for anything – we think, talk, and do everything very fast," says Benneian.

Before the broadcast the tapes needed to be cut, organized and sorted in packages. Once, at one of these Academy Awards ceremonies, I had to rush the tapes to editing after the end of the show. The show was live, but there were various versions: domestic and international, which I had to sort out and deliver. There I was – in a dress, trying to be proper, carrying all these heavy tapes downstairs, right where the Governor's Ball was taking place, and all the stars and honorary guests were having drinks. Suddenly, I missed a step and fell. The tapes flew from my hands and rolled down the stairs all over the ballroom, clunkety-clunkety-clunk. It was such an embarrassing, but hilariously funny moment. In reality, not everything goes as smooth as we wish. I still keep credentials, some of the tapes with my credits rolling and notebooks as memorabilia.

What were your responsibilities at Good Morning America?

For ten years I was the production manager at Good Morning, America for the Western Bureau. The production work involved a lot of traveling to locations all across the United States and some cases out of the country. Some of the travels required huge efforts in coordinating all the aspects of production. We took the entire crew, hosts and hostesses for the program. Our responsibilities were to set up everything – book mobile units, satellite trucks, grip (lighting) trucks, hotels, and cars. We would set up a stage, order satellite time, catering, permits, higher runners, police officers, security officers, and so on. I had to go before everybody else to set up everything, starting with an office for everyone to work from. Quite often, we would take a meeting room in a hotel for that. A funny but scary moment happened during the Alaska coverage. I was in charge of three cities: Anchorage, Portage Glacier and Kenai Peninsula. I got to Portage Glacier which is 40 miles south of Anchorage. The weather was not on our side; it was very windy and raining. The mobile unit was right in front of the Glacier, our cameras outside and the production office was set up in the small local museum. I was going into the mobile unit where the producer, director, and few other crew members were working. As I went up the metal steps and opened the door, a powerful gust of the wind slammed the heavy door to the side of the truck leaving me outside, desperately clinging to the door knob to avoid being blown away.

All of that is done for one day of work?

Yes, for the daily two-hour program. We would set the main location from where the host and hostess would work, and then we would have a different location with a separate satellite truck and crew for the weatherman. Sometimes I had to travel alone with a single crew member, meet the satellite truck operator and start setting up. After microphone and IFB were checked, we would test the lines before the guest would arrive. In those cases, the broadcast would go straight to New York, and of course we would be going live always in the middle of the night because of the three-hour difference. So we would be on location between 1 a.m. and 2 a.m. and be ready by 4 a.m. – when the show would start.

"Young professionals should network, reach out to people, do internships, take any jobs they are offered and have a good attitude toward their job and life in general."

You have probably met some famous persons...

During the Good Morning America days, I met a lot of interesting people. Once, I met President Gerald Ford. I was at lunch when I was told to fly on a last minute call, "You are going to Colorado." So I rushed home, packed, and took a plane. Early in the morning President Ford and his entourage arrived, and we sat him down for his live interview. Another time I met President Gorbachev who came to Los Angeles to meet President Reagan. I set up that interview as well. I'm a shy person and never take pictures, but I have a picture with Gorbachev. In my broken Russian I told him that I am from Armenia, so they took a photo of me shaking his hand. It was very exciting work, yet I never thought of it as something unusual because it was just what I always did. However, career wise there was nowhere for me to grow in production – the ABC West Coast Bureau was getting smaller and managerial positions were very limited. In order for me to advance I had to leave ABC, and I really didn't want to do that. I grew up here working side by side with my co-workers, so I decided to move on to finance.

How did you manage to get a higher education with your busy line of work?

My family immigrated to the U.S. in 1975, and back then people in my surroundings didn't emphasize college that much, so I had not finished my college, and took time off because I was so excited to get this job. I worked my way up to a manager, and then in 1990, decided to go back to school. I was a single mom at that time. When you are young, you have much more energy, so I traveled, went to school, and took care of my son. It took me seven years of night classes, but I got a business degree. I was excited that I had achieved the one dream that I always wanted – a college degree.

What has changed from those early years at ABC?

I worked in a department with 50-plus people where something was always happening. It was a very supportive group, but over the years we went through a lot of cutbacks, and our department is now gone. I am pretty much the only one who is left here. The show productions are being outsourced. Where ABC used to have their own production, now production companies are doing the job – all studio coordinators and production

Diane Benneian
1998 – Present
Manager of Finance and Operations for the West Coast Bureaus of ABC News. Supports ABC News shows: *World News*, *Nightline*, *This Week*, *Good Morning America* and *20/20*.
1988- 1998 – Production Manager at *Good Morning, America*.
1980-1998 – Production Assistant, worked at 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, ABC Sports, Motion Picture Academy Awards, etc.



↓
Benneian received "The Tinker Bell" award after 25 years, and "The Jiminy Cricket" after working 30 years with Disney.



managers have been cut back. Just two years ago, ABC News cut 25 percent of their headcount. So each time somebody was cut back a little bit of their responsibilities was added to my workload. From the technological point, we are now in HD vs. SD, meaning everything is shot, edited and fed digitally. Disney spent millions for a program SAP that was implemented in 2003 for all of financial reporting and payments. Nevertheless, how we do business hasn't changed much, with the exception that we are doing it with lot less people. We don't take time for anything – we think fast, we talk fast, we do everything fast. Last year we moved to Glendale where the KABC building is located. Although we lost almost half of our production staff, the production is still going on, and we still need crews, producers and support personnel. Now we hire mostly freelancers and work with the minimal staff. Yes, the economy is down and what can we do?

What would you suggest to college graduates who want to get into the field of TV?

If you are still in college, I would definitely say try internships. Most of our freelancers come from interns. In this close-knit industry there aren't that many positions, and there are definitely more people who want to get in than there are openings. Young professionals should network, reach out to people, do internships, and take any jobs they are offered – even the lowest positions. Take it for six months, and you never know where that job would lead you. Even if you are offered a job for two days a week, it's still a foot in the door. And another very important quality is to have a good attitude toward your job and life in general. Young graduates come in with various academic degrees in various fields, but if they have a negative attitude, that would not lead them anywhere. With a positive attitude people will be willing to teach you. If one knows a lot, but has a negative attitude, people still would not want to deal with it. Not so often in the past, but recently I see a lot more Armenians, especially at Disney. Most of them are motivated hard workers, and people notice that.

Looking back at your career can you say that you are fortunate?

Originally, I came from Armenia. For someone who came here at fourteen with no English at all, I can say that I achieved a lot. When I just started and people would say that they had been in the company for 20 years, I would think, "Wow, really?" Then, I received the Tinker Bell award after 25 years of working at the Disney subsidiary. Disney went out of their way putting on a wonderful evening gala. Two years ago, I was honored to receive the 30th year award. The years flew by so quickly. I love Disney and ABC; it has been very interesting to work here. Most importantly, I have a great family, a loving husband and two wonderful children, a son and daughter. Of course, I am fortunate. ■

Maf Club World Cup
The New Don in Town



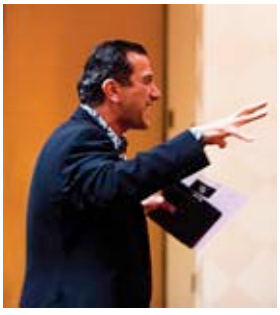
The first annual Maf Club World Cup opened with a bang on July 12, 2012, in Las Vegas and ended in a grand finale on the eve of July 14. The games went off without a hitch or a snitch at the Tropicana Hotel, and spectators crowded around television screens in the grand ballroom to view the live games.















Guests from the United States, Russia, Ukraine, England and Armenia arrived in style and graced the red carpet for their photo opportunities.

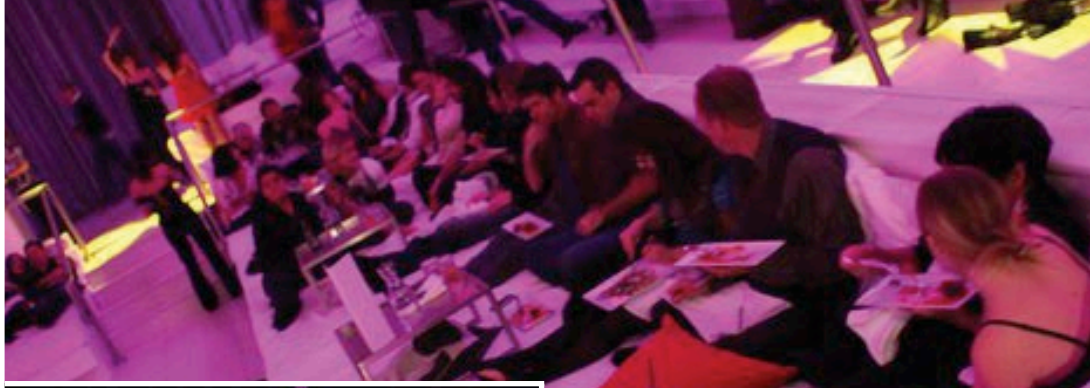
Aptly situated next to the Mob Experience Mafia Museum at the hotel, four games were simultaneously played in Russian, Armenian and English, starting every 15 minutes.

After an intense three days of Mafia wars, the tournament's top ten players got made and were awarded $30,000. Players in the top 10 were guaranteed cash prize winners. The winning team walked away with $3,500 each, and the losing players $1,500.

The winners of the world cup, the red team, consisted of Armen Apoyan, Edgar Khachatryan, Vighen Mkrtoumian, Dina Petrosyan, Hayk Tokhatyan, Mariam Bakunts and Asim Rustamov.

The black team included Rick Lax, Mihran Gharibjanyan and Gevorg Hovsepyan. What is the Maf Club World Cup all about? The game is known in mainstream culture as "Assassin," "Werewolf" and "Witch Hunt." It is similar to poker in the bluffing aspect, but has an added element of role-playing. Its origins can be traced back to the Masons over 150 years ago, and it later found its way into the training methods of KGB security agents in Soviet Russia. The rules were ultimately solidified by a group of young students from Yerevan State Medical Institute in 1980s Armenia who branded the game "Maf." After this, Mafia spread globally to include clubs first in Russia, followed by Armenia, Ukraine and the United States; the club in Yerevan has been in operation for over 20 years. It will now be played exclusively under the umbrella of Maf Club in Los Angeles.













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Olympians and Celebrities Join Forces for Safe4Athletes

Yerevan Magazine took part in the fundraiser for Safe4Athletes, an organization established as a way of increasing awareness about sexual abuse among athletes and their coaches, held at the home of former Mayor of Los Angeles, Richard Riordan.







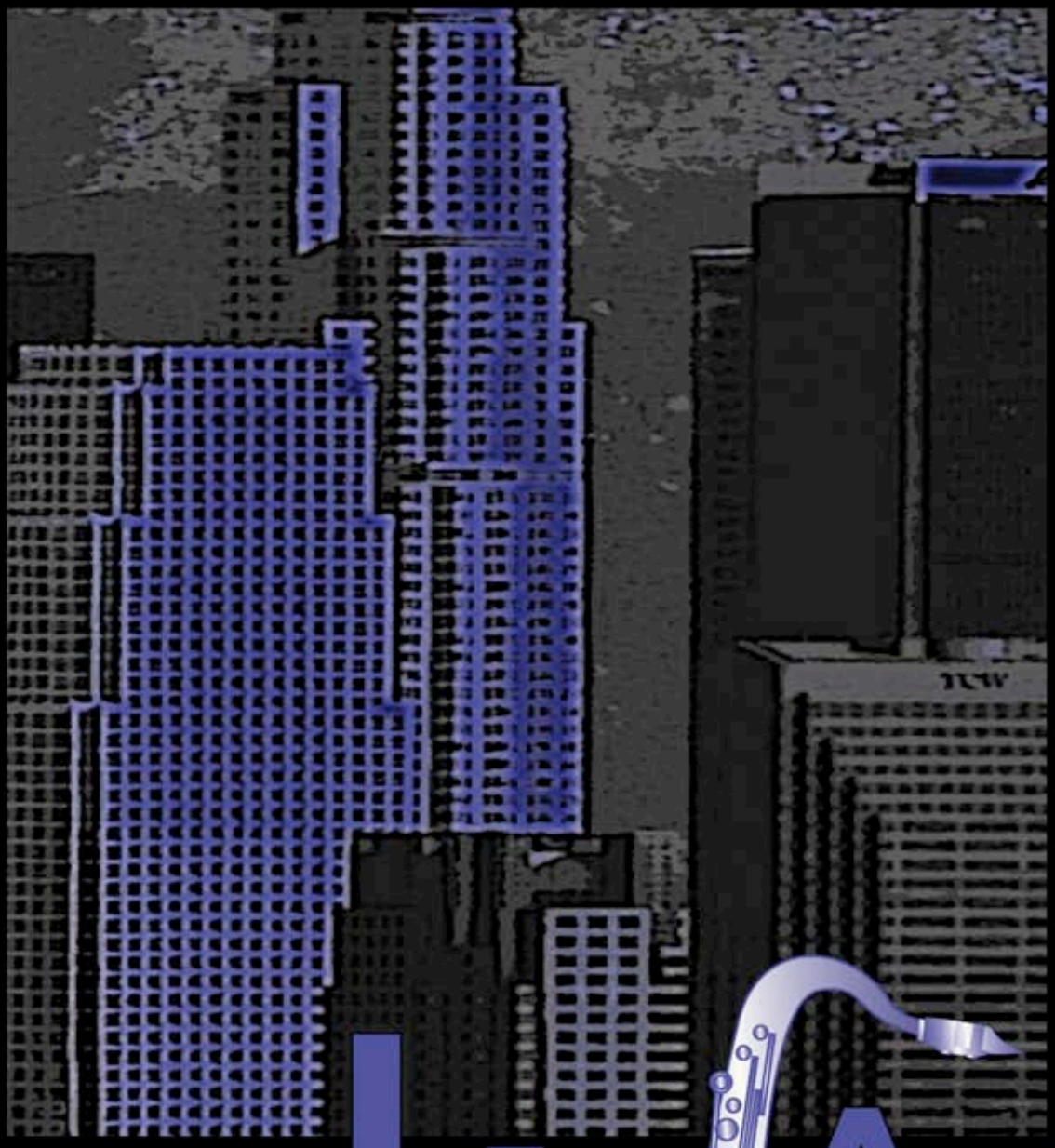






The fundraiser welcomed Olympic athletes and actors from the Los Angeles community. The supporters included Frank Medrano, known for his work in *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Sleepers*, Ann Meyers Drysdale, who was part of the United States' first Olympic women's basketball team in 1976, Dr. Sammy Lee, who graduated from the USC School of Medicine in 1947 and became the first Asian American to win an Olympic gold medal for the United States in 1948, Estella Warren, a Canadian National Champion in Swimming, who successfully crossed over from the worlds of sports into the world of film with her roles in *Planet of the Apes* and *The Cooler*, and dozens of others.

The Armenian community also made its presence at the fundraiser with the attendance of Valerie McCaffrey, whose casting credits include *American History X* and *Hard Candy*, and who also produced *Lost and Found in Armenia*, which stars Jamie Kennedy and Angela Sarafyan. Valerie McCaffrey also introduced Richard Riordan, who briefly spoke about the organization and their importance in our community. Katherine Star, Founder and President of Safe4Athletes, who herself was sexually abused by a previous coach, also spoke to the crowd, stating her desire for creating such an organization. Safe4Athletes was founded on behalf of male and female athletes who have been "physically, emotionally and sexually abused by their coaches." In her belief, many organizations have turned a blind eye on this matter and have defended their coaches in the past. Safe4Athletes is a non-profit organization that advocates for athlete welfare, where a safe environment is established free of sexual abuse, bullying and harassment.



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37th Homenetmen's Navasartian Games

Year after year, Homenetmen's Navasartian Games triumphantly draw together thousands of young members and athletes in competitive tournaments, attracting the community at large at the same time. The variety of sports that comprise these games include basketball, soccer, volleyball, track and field, tennis, swimming, ping-pong and chess.







The 37th Homenetmen Navasartian Games officially kicked off on Saturday, May 12th in Los Angeles, when the Navasartian torch was carried from the Holy Martyrs Armenian Apostolic Church to Birmingham High School by a team of athletes representing Homenetmen chapters. The opening ceremony also included two special announcements, including the appointments of Mr. & Mrs. Gagik and Madine Gevorkian as Honorary Presidents of the 37th Navasartian Games and Maro Kechichian as the Exemplary Homenetmen Member. Two all-star games followed, dedicated to the memory of the late Rima Abedi-Sagherian, who was a member of the Homenetmen Regional Executive.

In celebration of the vast accomplishments of the athletes participating in the games, more than 500 Homenetmen members, supporters and guests filled the Universal Hilton Hotel's banquet hall on Sunday, July 1, 2012, for the Victory Banquet. The banquet's successful kick-off reception was held two weeks prior on June 14th at Homenetmen's Kevork Andonian Hall in Eagle Rock, Calif.

The championship games culminated primarily at Birmingham High School between July 3-7, 2012, during which the five-day Navasartian Festival was held featuring fireworks, well-known singers and entertainment, a classic car show, an arts and crafts section for children, as well as booths selling delectable foods. The 37th Navasartian Games hosted 668 basketball games as well as 90 plus soccer games, volleyball, track, swimming, tennis, table tennis and chess competitions. Seventeen Homenetmen chapters and their volunteers sold a variety of foods along with 55 vendors, and over a dozen entertainers performed, including Karnig Sarkissian, Harout Pamboukjian, Arsham, Sahag Sisslian, Antoine Bezdjian and more.

The closing ceremony of the 37th Navasartian Games was held on Saturday, July 7, 2012 at Birmingham High School before thousands of Homenetmen members and supporters. Following the closing remarks, the much-anticipated parade commenced with Armenian veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars marching at the forefront. Spectators watched as athletes and scouts of the region's 18 Homenetmen chapters marched. Once this procession ended and participants collectively gathered on the field, the championship trophies were presented to the victorious chapters. The championship trophies were dedicated to the memory of Bedros Akpolat at the wishes of his wife Edna and son Alan.

Overall Rankings

Tennis
1st Place: Glendale "Ararat" Chapter
2nd Place: Fresno "Sassoon" Chapter

Table Tennis
1st Place: Glendale "Ararat" Chapter
2nd Place: Burbank "Sipan" Chapter
3rd Place: Fresno "Sassoon" Chapter

Swimming
1st Place: San Fernando Valley "Massis" Chapter
2nd Place: Burbank "Sipan" Chapter
3rd Place: Santa Clara "Ani" Chapter

Track & Field
1st Place: San Fernando Valley "Massis" Chapter
2nd Place: South Bay "Arakatz" Chapter
3rd Place: Pasadena "Azadamard" Chapter

Volleyball
1st Place: San Fernando Valley "Massis" Chapter
2nd Place: Glendale "Ararat" Chapter

Soccer
1st Place: Los Angeles Chapter
2nd Place: San Fernando Valley "Massis" Chpater
3rd Place: San Francisco Chapter

Basketball
1st Place: Glendale "Ararat" Chapter
2nd Place: Los Angeles Chapter
3rd Place: Pasadena "Azadamard" Chapter



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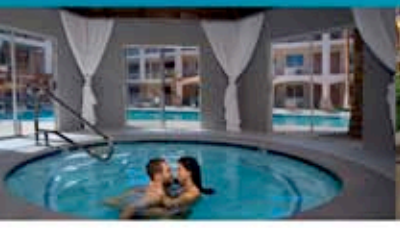


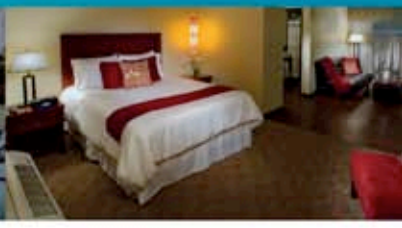

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2012 Olympics
Inspire a Generation



The Olympic Games – there is no international phenomenon of its like. It is hallowed in 116 years of political and controversial tradition, as well as the blood, sweat and tears of athletes representing their respective countries through life-long disciplines they have painstakingly pursued. This year's 30th Olympiads were no different; there was incredulous judging and a country (Azerbaijan) willing to pay $9 million to buy gold medals. But more importantly, there were captivating storylines. Michael Phelps solidified his stronghold as the greatest Olympian of all time by upping his medal count to 22, eighteen of them gold. Head Coach Adam Krikorian led the U.S. Women's Water Polo Team to its first gold medal. The gold-winning "Fab Five" U.S. Women's Gymnastics team, led by Gabby Douglas and McKayla Maroney – and her coach Arthur Akopyan – rivaled themselves against the 1984 "Magnificent Seven" as perhaps the best team ever. There were also 25 Armenian hopefuls that travelled to London in search of lifelong glory, and the countries first gold medal. Armenian Judoka Arsen Galstyan won gold, but it came with an asterisk as Russia took the honorary credit. However, the trio of Arsen Julfalakyan (74-kg wrestling, silver) Arthur Aleksanyan (96-kg wrestling, bronze) and Hripsime Khurshudyan (75-kg weightlifting, bronze) collectively raised the Armenian flag thrice as a unit. Not too shabby, considering they won more medals than 151 of the 204 other participating countries.

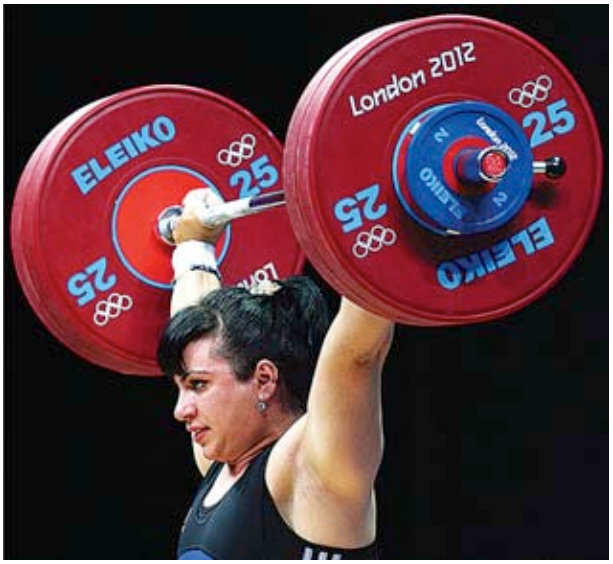
Photo **PanArmenian PHOTO**



← Arman Yeremyan lost his shot at a bronze medal in Taekwondo.

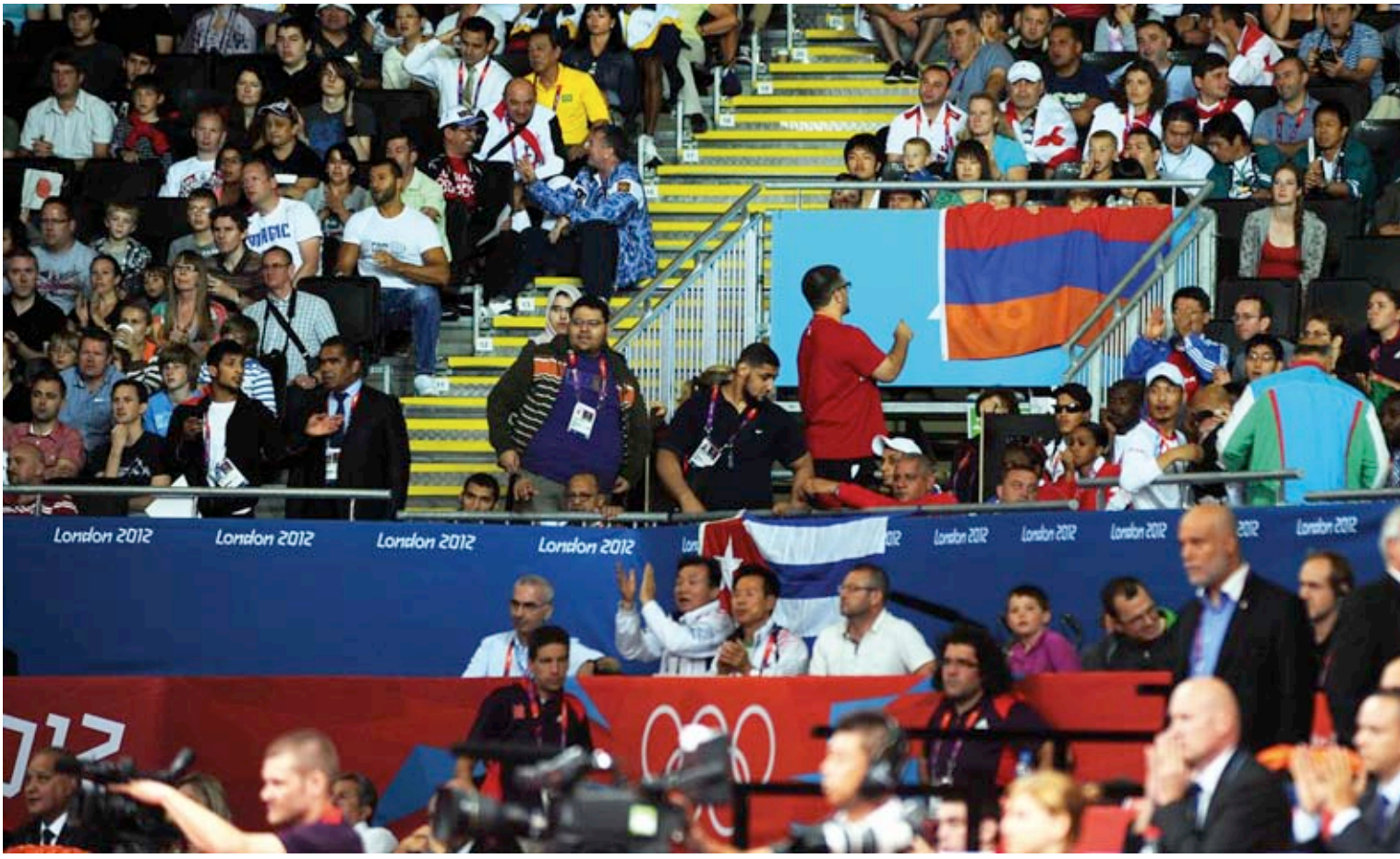
↓ Hovhannes Davtyan reached the quarter-finals in men's 60-kg judo.







←
Hripsime Khurshudyan won bronze in the 75-kilogram category.



↑
Supporters of Armenia were out in full force throughout the Games.

↓
Norayr Bakhtamyan finished 16th and 18th in two shooting competitions.





→
Meline Daluzyan competed in women's 69-kg weightlifting.

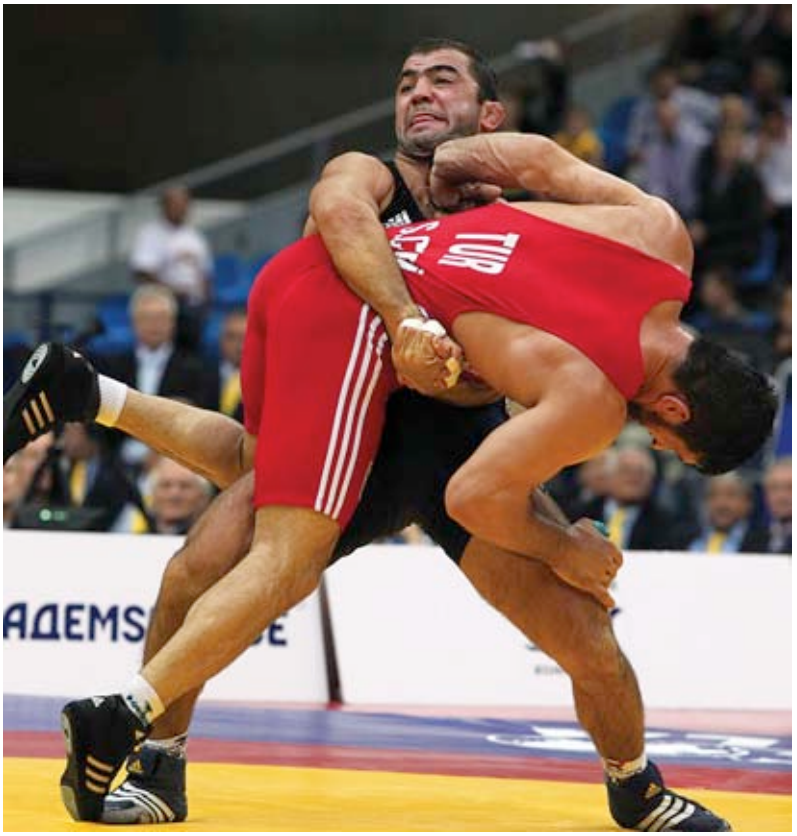






→
Arthur Aleksanyan won bronze in Greco-Roman 96-kilogram category.





←
Arsen Julfalakyan won silver in the Greco-Roman 74-kilogram category.

↓
Julfalakyan and Aleksanyan welcomed afer winning their medals.



Sports: The Best Medicine at All Times

Olympic training begins with children and builds their muscles and minds. Although the ancient Olympic Games took place in Greece as a Greek event, the modern International Olympics began in the summer of 1896 in Athens with European countries and the United States only. There were no Middle Eastern participants, but Armenians have always had athletic clubs and trained students to compete and excel. It was a way of life, and, especially for men, it was the beginning of the path to leadership.

Photos and text provided **Ruth Thomasian from Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives**



Courtesy of Jack Torosian 201-99, New York, New York

All Togethor Now

Soviet Armenian kindergarten children, c. 1930s-1950s, under the watchful eye of their teacher, perform their daily routine of calisthenics designed to develop muscular tone and promote physical well being. The order and regimentation of the exercises were consistent with the Soviet Union's Communist ideology. This press photo, without identification of the photographer, was most likely used to promote a public health message: fresh air, sun and moving the body is the best medicine.



Courtesy of Steve Najarian 8-910, Newtown Square, Pennsylvania

The Balancing Act

September 1913, Alexandria, Egypt, athletes of the Marmnamarzagan Agoomp (transliteration of the Armenian words on the back fence meaning Gymnastic Club). Uniformed gymnasts pose for the picture with suited gentlemen-judges or teachers looking on. Four young men with strong backs, shoulders and arms balance on the parallel bars – two at the ends of the bar perform handstands, while one in the middle does a backbend with another standing on his arched abdomen waving a flag to create a human tower. Two athletes stand on the ground with team mates balanced on their shoulders, while four others look on, perhaps waiting for their turn to participate.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The Coach's Clinic

Over the last year and a half, a stable of professional boxing and mixed martial arts champions have risen through the ranks of their respective sports with one familiar man guiding them to glory. Edmond Tarverdyan is the trainer behind some of today's most elite fighters. He is a perfectionist in his craft, an esteemed coach in fighting circles and an owner of a well-regarded fighting club that has churned out pro after pro. At 30 years old, he is an on-again off-again combatant who prefers being a brother figure to his fighters more than giving whippings like a father.

Text **Edgar Melik-Stepanyan** | Photo **Tigran Tovmasyan**

→
Edmond Tarverdyan is the brains behind "Rowdy" Ronda Rousey, the newest phenomenon in MMA.



Tarverdyan currently trains Ronda Rousey, Manny Gamburyan, Vanes Martirosyan and Art Hovhannisyan.

The sounds of pop-whap, pop-whap, pop-whap echoes off the walls like a Fourth of July fireworks show. The musky air inside is as thick as the summer afternoon outside.

Today, Ronda Rousey, Manny Gamburyan and Art Hovhannisyan are taking turns with Tarverdyan, perfecting the craft of striking. The coach relentlessly tutors – the fighters in the ring, as well as the ones watching them from the canvas – until his athletes are physically, mentally and emotionally prepared.

For the first two hours of the training session Tarverdyan works with Rousey, attempting to perfect her striking technique inside of the ring. Rousey, who lately has been the alpha dog of Tarverdyan's testosterone-filled Glendale Fighting Club gym, is training with unbelievable vigor. Meanwhile, the Showtime crew films the entire process for an all-access show leading up to her fight against Sarah Kaufman.

"Rowdy" Ronda Rousey is currently the undefeated champion in Strikeforce's women's bantamweight division. Sporting a 6-0 record – with all victories coming by way of a first round arm bar submission – the 2008 Olympics judo bronze medalist has elevated herself to a rock star status.

In a span of a handful of days, she graced the cover of *ESPN The Magazine Body Issue*, put Michael Phelps on blast for isolating himself in the 2008 Games from fellow athletes, challenged Kim Kardashian to a fight for being a bad role model, and then hosted the television show *TMZ*.

But all that was on her free time. Right now, she is working, and she smells of sweat perfume. This particular morning, she and her coach work cohesively as Rousey paces around the ring and Tarverdyan provides instructions. Both are in sync, and it's a seemingly a perfect teacher-student union. It is also one that may have not existed if it was not for Rousey's persistence.

Tarverdyan had no intention of working with Rousey because after all, she is, well...a woman. But then, Tarverdyan saw YouTube clips of her fights in the 2008 Olympics and became familiar with her intense training habits. He knew he had a special athlete on his hands, woman or not.

"Edmond is a perfectionist, and I am stubborn," she confesses. "I would be lying if I said we didn't butt heads." Tarverdyan agrees. "It's a good thing to be a perfectionist, but it can also drive you crazy."

"Being a girl, I'm not exactly common place in most gyms," Rousey says. "Women fighters are traditionally not as profitable as guys. A lot of coaches won't waste their time. I think a lot of athletes have this idea that a trainer should be lucky to work with them. You have to prove yourself to get the best people to work with you. I had to prove myself; that's because he's a good coach. He's not just going to work with anybody. He doesn't want to put his time and energy into somebody who is not going to do the work." On August 18, all the hard work paid off as Rousey defeated Sarah Kaufman in 54 seconds. The first person she thanked in her post-fight interviewEdmond.

Back to training day at GFC, after Rousey, Tarverdyan steps into the ring to work with Gamburyan, who is preparing for his UFC on Fox 4 fight against Michihiro Omigawa. Gamburyan is on a three-fight losing streak and has not won since April 24, 2010 when he knocked out Mike Brown in the biggest victory of his career. His training crew is a bit more anxious as they work on Gamburyan's defense techniques. Which is not surprising, as four consecutive losses in the Ultimate Fighting Championship is usually your ticket out to another job.

"That's it! That's it!" Tarverdyan confirms to Gamburyan as he pounds away at his body vest.

"Perfect, perfect," he yells again as Gamburyan punches away with Tarverdyan holding mitts and increasing his student's speed. One minute, Tarverdyan boxes with him, next – Gamburyan takes his trainer to the floor to practice his ground game.

"Hit me hard in the vest," Tarverdyan instructs. ▸



Miguel Salazar

A veteran in muay Thai (18-2), Tarverdyan made his MMA debut with a first round KO victory in May.



Sherdog.com



Showtime

Tarverdyan preparing Strikeforce light heavyweight Gegard Mousasi (32-3).

For his fights in America, Vic Darchinyan (37-5) resumes training camp with Tarverdyan.

Gamburyan, with a 5-foot-5, 145-pound chiseled frame, doesn't want to. Tarverdyan is not one to be intimidated. He wants Gamburyan to box, to move, to take an opponent to the mat, to knock a foe out or to cause a submission. One way or another, he wants Gamburyan to be perfect, to win.

"His knowledge is enough to teach me how to box in the MMA," said Gamburyan, who has eight fights in the UFC to his credit and an additional four in its former sibling company, World Extreme Cagefighting, including a title shot against Jose Aldo. "He's dedicated. He loves the sport. He loves what he's doing."

Weeks later, on August 4, Gamburyan uses an arsenal of takedowns, big head kicks and winging rights to win an entertaining unanimous decision in front of a sold out Staples Center against Omigawa. Afterwards in the locker room, a happy Tarverdyan squeezes Gamburyan in a bear hug, gives him a kiss on the cheek, and then reminds him that training begins again in two weeks.

Outside of the ring, Gamburyan, Rousey, and Tarverdyan eat together, watch fights at their trainer's home and shoot hoops with one another. They're all friends, but whether it's inside a ring in Glendale, in a pool at the YMCA at five in the morning, on the Santa Monica stairs, or the hills of the San Gabriel Mountains, Tarverdyan always pushes his protégés to extremes.

Tarverdyan's circle of friends and trainees does not stop with Rousey and Gamburyan. It includes the undefeated boxer Vanes Martirosyan, a junior middleweight contender who is signed with Top Rank Boxing. "He's a good trainer," Martirosyan said. "He knows boxing. He's an all-around good athlete. He's good with the fighters mentally."

Art Hovhannisyan is another pupil of Tarverdyan who has risen in the ranks of boxing. Tarverdyan recently guided Hovhannisyan to a hard-hitting, fast-paced scrap in the main event of Showtime's *ShoBox: The New Generation*. On July 20, the undefeated Hovhannisyan (15-0, 8 KOs) turned back a determined bid by former lightweight champion Miguel Acosta to win a hard-fought 10-round split decision.

"I think my conditioning played a great role in my performance, but at this level you need to be good in all facets," admits Hovhannisyan.

And then there are mixed martial artists Roman Mitichyan, Georgi Karakhanyan, muay Thai kickboxer Alfred Keshishyan and boxer Gabriel Tolmajyan. The list goes on and on. They've all been part of a stable of fighters for whom Tarverdyan has big dreams for. "We're going to have world-class fighters from this gym," Tarverdyan says.

Tarverdyan's work rarely ends with training. He attends press conferences, holds media sessions, trains and corners other world champions, like Vic Darchinyan, volunteers for the Desi Geestman Foundation, a non-profit organization that benefits kids with cancer, and serves as a co-promoter with George Bastrmajyan for their Lights Out Promotions company. "You have trainers who are there for the fighters for two hours, and then there is Edmond, who is there for his fighters 24 hours," Bastrmajyan says. "His commitment to the fighters is amazing. He helps them both mentally and physically."

At home, Tarverdyan is a husband of six years to Diana Avetisyan and father of two children, Ella, 3, and Roman, 1. Although his children are still young, Tarverdyan has a different kind of sleeping issue.

"I can't sleep because I'm watching tapes and thinking about the fights," he says. Sunday is his only day off, and that's reserved for family "unless someone really wants to work," he says.

"It's in his blood," says wife Diana, who notes they last took a vacation two years ago in Hawaii. "I don't think there's anything else that he would've done."

His life has not been easy since he was 16. That's when he began balancing school and life at his newly opened gym. That is also when Tarverdyan began training in muay Thai kickboxing, Thailand's national sport, and also began training students. The numbers of students were small and the gym was tiny, but the training was fierce. Even with the difficulties of two full-time commitments, Tarverdyan flourished.

With a background in martial arts – he began training when he was seven – he fought around the world, building an 18-2 muay Thai record, and held the World



↑
Edmond Tarverdyan has stepped in for Freddie Roach and guided undefeated former U.S Olympian Vanes Martirosyan (32-0) to his last four victories.

Boxing Council International welterweight title. Edmond, the fighter known as "The Diamond," made a decision to put his own career of a fighter on hold to polish the styles of others, in spite of the challenge that came along with his choice.

"Life in general is hard," he says. "My challenges are a little bit mental and physical. Sometimes I get exhausted, but the fighters make me happy. I've been having fun lately. Some days are going to be bad. There are days when I think, should I keep doing this, or go back and just be a fighter and not a trainer?"

His fighting spirit has not waned. At the urging of his peers, Tarverdyan made his MMA debut earlier this May. His fight lasted two minutes 18 seconds and made a resounding impression. With a vicious knee to the chin, Tarverdyan knocked out Phil Nunez in the first round of the "Chaos at the Casino," the main event at the Hollywood Park and Casino. Immediately, there was talk of Tarverdyan attempting to join the ranks of the upper-echelon at UFC.

"Every fighter you talk to thinks they're going to the UFC or should already be there. Edmond thinks that too, but Edmond truly can be a UFC fighter," says *Glendale News-Press* Sports Editor Grant Gordon, who has covered Tarverdyan as a trainer and fighter since 2007. "Edmond's striking is as good if not better than any of the best striker's in the UFC's ranks. He has the skills, the mindset and he's around the right people. It's just a matter of him having the time and, really, a desire to do it. Though, I really think he feels a need to coach. He loves it, and I've always felt that he cares more about his fighters than his own fighting. He's just a very selfless person."

"My challenges are a little bit mental and physical. Sometimes I get exhausted, but the fighters make me happy."

Tarverdyan says he doesn't know yet if he wants to resume a full-time fighting schedule. He appreciates the feedback, but he is not ready yet to make the decision to commit to training for his own burgeoning career. He says, by the end of this year he might fight a few more mixed martial arts bouts before choosing his path, and promises that a decision will come.

"There are days when I know I could fight," Tarverdyan says. "When I spar, I believe I can be a UFC champion. If I say I'm going to be a UFC champion, I have the confidence that I will be a champion. I love it." He continues, "Now, it's a tough choice. I don't know if I want to."

Then there are days when he realizes that his Glendale Fighting Club has grown – more than 300 students train there – and fighters are seeking him out. "I love training too," he says. "If you love what you do, and you really put in time and work, and in spite of hard days, you don't quit and break down, you'll be a good coach. It's an art." ■

Rough, Rugged and Raw



In life, we are all born dreamers. The only difference is some of us are crazy enough to keep dreaming long into adulthood. Twenty-three year old music video director Alex Nazari has a long list of accomplishments. In his short career, he has worked for artists such as 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg, Chris Brown, Bow Wow and T.I., despite the fact that he had no formal education in production and no contacts in the industry before he started. The only ingredient he had was the courage to pursue his dreams.

Text **Armen Karaoghlanian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**

Alex Nazari is a young director who has been making a name for himself in the realm of music videos, but despite his success, his parents still cannot make sense of his career choices. "They want to kill me for shooting videos for all these hip-hop artists," says Nazari, dressed in all black with a hat that reads, "Can't Stop the Crooks." It's no wonder his parents misunderstand their son's career ambitions.

The first encounter he had with producing videos was in high school, where he made short videos for a class using iMovie. The process was very casual, but left a lasting impression on him. In college, before he eventually stumbled across UCLA, he enrolled in classes that sounded appealing. This resulted in a black-and-white photography class, where he was first introduced to the world of cameras. "I wasn't into filmmaking, I wasn't into cameras, I wasn't into anything like that, but I loved that photography class." The class taught him about the foundations of photography, and he even found early success when he won an award for one of his photographs he took with a 35mm film camera. The would-be director claims he was never interested in photography, which he only considered a creative hobby.

The creativity that resulted from the class was later revisited when Serge, a friend from high school, claimed he had plans of becoming a professional photographer. Nazari was immediately skeptical considering his friend had no previous experience working with cameras, but decided to help because he knew the basics of photography. The amateur photographers came together and began snapping pictures of their cars. Serge, however, hooked up with Ya Boy, at the time an up-and-coming rapper from the Bay Area, and his career began building right in front of his friend's eyes. Nazari soon recalled his high school days when he was producing short videos and figured if his friend could become a photographer with no prior experience, perhaps he could become a director of music videos.

The young man's parents, however, which he calls "super strict," disapproved of his plans. They constantly remarked, "What are you doing? Why are you wasting your time? Go to school. Get a degree. Get a real job." In response, Nazari walked away from UCLA and borrowed a camera from a friend. The gamble certainly paid off.

"I honestly didn't know anything about filmmaking. I came into it blind," says Nazari.

Alex Nazari is often responsible for directing music videos of hit singles for artists. His videos have collectively generated close to 100 million hits on YouTube in a short amount of time.

The first few music videos were produced without a budget; Alex was shooting in the streets. The entire process was amateur, but his vision was undeniable. The young director continued producing music videos and established relationships and contacts. Jay Tauzin, his now-producer, who had previously worked on productions for artists such as 50 Cent and Kanye West, saw a great deal of potential in him. They joined forces quickly thereafter, and Nazari's productions began evolving.

"I didn't know what an AD [assistant director] was, I didn't know what a producer was, I didn't know what an executive producer was, I didn't know what an art director was. I didn't know anything."

Tauzin showed him the ropes and brought along a team of craftsmen. This provided him with the freedom of exercising his vision as a director. This also meant he was no longer holding the camera himself because he had a cinematographer to take care of that for him.

In the past few months, Nazari has attracted other clients as well. Rank & File Media, a commercial and music video production company, contacted him after seeing his work. They eventually signed him as a director.

Nazari now plans to build his resume with each music video. "We just have to keep outdoing ourselves; every video has to get better and better," he says. The productions are, indeed, getting bigger and better. Nazari has replaced his DSLR camera with a Red Epic, a camera used regularly on feature films. The budgets for each music video are slowly increasing as well. The zero dollar budgets have now been replaced by budgets that range upwards of $80,000. In addition, he is often responsible for directing music videos of hit singles for artists,

and his videos have generated millions of hits on YouTube in a short amount of time. Tyga's "Rack City" climbed all the way up to No. 2 on the Billboards chart for Rap Songs and No. 7 on the Billboard Hot 100. The music video for the song currently has over 40 million hits on YouTube.

The music video for Travis Porter's "Ride Like That," which Nazari was working on when we visited his production studio, is particularly unique. "Imagine a Vogue advertisement in motion. That's the whole concept behind the video," he says. The video features professional models and has a classy approach. This change in style required him to hire a different cinematographer, one whose vision better matched the look he wanted to achieve.

The production schedules for the music videos have become increasingly hectic as well. In describing his production process, Nazari says everything begins with a phone call. In fact, he is so sought-after that during our meeting his cellphone rang constantly. Nazari states that the record label first contacts his representative, who then sends him the record and a budget for the video. Nazari then writes a treatment, which usually takes him four to five days. The treatment consists of detailed references about the music video. The music video is then officially booked and Nazari sends the information and treatment along to his producer, and as he says "that's when the fun begins."

The physical production for each video usually lasts one day, depending on the scale of the production. Productions are usually 12-16 hour workdays; nighttime shoots begin when the sun goes down and end when the sun comes up, and daytime shoots begin when the sun comes up and don't end until the sun goes down.

If that's not enough work, he also deals with a lot of personalities. Nazari explains that often he works with rappers who still have affiliations with gangs, and as a result, it's not uncommon for people on the set to carry weapons for protection. Nazari has seen things get a little out of hand, although it's more exciting than dangerous for him.

The defining factor for him and what sets him apart from others is his work ethic. Nazari has a quick turnaround on his projects. This, he claims, is often because of the artists' schedules. These artists are often planning an album release and need a music video that will assist with the promotion. That's where Nazari steps in and ensures that he can produce an appealing music video in a short amount of time, without having the overall product suffer because of time constraints.

In addition, he states he is far more interested in his artists than flashy visuals and productions. "I like more than anything to show the artist perform," he says. The dozens of music videos he has directed can all be described as raw. The videos are often concerned with the performer and capture the artist's energy. The center of attention, for instance, in his music video for Kid Ink's "Lowkey Poppin," is a burning car, but Nazari never lets us forget about the artist. There is always a greater emphasis placed on people rather than visuals, and even when he shoots in neighborhoods where hundreds of people fill up the frame alongside the artist, we are

Videography

Tyga – Rack City, Rack City (Remix), Make It Nasty, Better Have My Money, Like Me, First Time, Well Done, Wonder Woman, Reminded, Lap Dance, Dancin 4 Dollas Snapbacks Back YG – Toot It and Boot It, Patty Cake, Ima Thug Kid Ink – Lowkey Poppin, Get Mine, Time of Your Life 2Chainz – Spend It, Stunt, Murder Travis Porter – Ayy Ladies, Down Low, You Don't Know, Aww Yea, Ride Like That Lil Twist – Carte Blanche, Over Again Yung Berg – Sex 'n The City Gudda Gudda – Extraordinary Bow Wow – Pretty Lady Soulja Boy – Digital Wiz Khalifa – The Statement The Rej3ctz – Cat Daddy Ray J – Drinks in the Air Mann – Gold Herringbone



← YG, Alex Nazari and Snoop Lion on the set of YG's hit single's music video "Toot It and Boot It."



constantly reminded of the power of the performer. Nazari says he plans on working with different artists, regardless of genres. In addition, he plans on branching out of his craft altogether once he feels he is ready.

"I want to slowly start getting into narratives, short films. I feel like I have a long time for that. I want to kill it in music videos."

Nazari realizes that although well-established music video directors such as Michael Bay and David Fincher have successfully transitioned over into feature films, he is careful about making that transition happen too soon. He admires how these directors have handled the move away from music videos into feature films, but plans to establish himself in music videos before he considers another medium.

Nazari has once again outdone himself. The director recently finished work on an experimental music video for Lupe Fiasco (Around My Way), which combines animation with live action. This required his team to create cartoon characters, something he had never done before in his projects, but a challenge he welcomed.

The young director also says he has always dreamed of working with Kanye West because like him, Nazari loves pushing boundaries. That's a dream that can easily become reality because, just like all his other dreams, all he needs is a little bit of courage.

"If I can do it, if I can get into what I'm doing right now, then anybody can. I know it's very cliché, but I can definitely say I've got the best job in the world."

In our meeting together, Alex Nazari emphasized that anything is possible in life. "If I can do it, if I can get into what I'm doing right now, then anybody can. I know it's very cliché, but I can definitely say I've got the best job in the world."

In fact, his parents are now slowly making sense of his career choice, and he hopes this article will cement their beliefs.

"An interview in a magazine like this? My mom might start crying, who knows?" ■

The Met's New Star



Cory Weaver/Metropolitan Opera

Rodion Pogossov has been called a "barihunk," one of the "sexiest baritone hunks" in opera today. He is quickly becoming celebrated for his stage acting and glorious singing at New York's famed Metropoitan Opera. Last season he sang the title role in the "Barber of Seville," and the sold out audience went wild. This is just one of several operas this 33-year-old singer and actor has performed on world famous stages in Russia, Europe, Canada and New York in the last ten years. At age 20, he had already been awarded Russia's National Bella Voice Competition in Moscow, and a year later, the International Dvorak Competition in the Czech Republic.

Interview **Florence Avakian**

Your performance at the Metropolitan Opera as the lead in the Barber of Seville was a triumph. And for the 2012-2013 season, you will be at the Met again from October to December, performing the Barber of Seville in English. When was your first Metropolitan Opera appearance?

For the 2001–2002 season, my Met debut took place as Herald in Otello at the Met's Opening Night Gala. I also sang the roles of Marullo in Rigoletto, and Fiorello in the Barber of Seville. And the year before, I made my Carnegie Hall debut with the Metropolitan Opera Chamber Ensemble performing Stravinsky's Renard under the baton of James Levine.

What motivated you to go into acting and music? And how did your early training and performances catapult you to the Metropolitan Opera?

When I was ten, my grandfather, to keep me off the streets, took me to the musical theatre which started my love of music and drama. As a young kid, to see this imagination and fantasy on stage was amazing. It was magic for a kid. I was also fascinated by hearing this boy Robertino Loretti who sang Neapolitan songs. So I started to imitate him and sing like him, but only in school productions. However, the theater was my first love. At 16 years old, I went to Moscow State Musical College for four years, then two years at the Gnesins Academy of Music. It was great because it was music theatre – not only acting, but classic ballet dancing, acrobatics, and voice and piano lessons. At 19, I was also so lucky to have a lesson with the legendary Pavel Lisitzian, one of the greatest singers in the world. He was so open, humble and warm toward young singers. Today, people at the Metropolitan Opera still remember him and his great voice.

I started performing as a soloist in the Nove (New) Opera, my debut role being Papageno in Die Zauberflote.

> "I started performing as a soloist in the Nove (New) Opera, my debut role being Papageno in Die Zauberflote."

At that time, I auditioned and got the part of Hamlet in Hamlet led by the famous movie director Sakhurov, with the conductor Eugene Kolobov. Unfortunately, it was never produced due to conflicts between them. Interestingly, my father's brother who was named Hamlet played Hamlet in Armenia. Lenore Rosenberg, a casting director at the Metropolitan Opera, came to Moscow and gave a master class to a huge group of young singers. I was 20 then, and sang three arias for her. She then invited me to audition at the Metropolitan. I didn't realize then what an important theatre it is. I auditioned for three straight days there, and they proposed a contract. However, I had a problem because I had never been so far from my family and friends. Also I knew only Russian, no English. I never realized how hard it would be because if you are on the top of this mountain, it is a huge responsibility. A new, stressful adult life began for me, but it was a great experience. I lived in New York for the next two and a half years, studying. Then I started looking for jobs, which was difficult because I was only 23 and a lyric baritone. I didn't have a huge voice. When I started working with the British agency Askonasholt, I started getting small parts; then my debut took place at the Frankfurt Opera in 2005. My big debut at the Met was as Papageno in the new production of the Magic Flute. I was 26 and got great critical reviews. At the Metropolitan Opera alone, I have sung in more than 50 performances, specifically in the Barber of Seville and the Magic Flute. Recently I sang my first Verdi role in Don Carlo in the Hamburg State Opera house and the title role in Eugene Onegin at the Welsh National Opera. ▸

What feelings do you have just before, during and af er a performance? Is there any fear, anxiety? What singing engagement has been the most memorable for you? And what opera that you haven't sung would you like to perform?

Before a performance, I concentrate, of course. There is always fear, maybe adrenaline is a better word. If you don't feel this, you are empty. Once you are on the stage, in the atmosphere, you become relaxed. Because I studied as an actor in opera, there is always more control. If you are completely loose, you will lose everything. At the end, if the performance went well, with a great atmosphere and a good response from the audience, there is such a release and a feeling of great exhaustion. If it didn't go well, you start to blame yourself. We are artists, so some part of our skin is always open.

All my performances have been memorable, but because it was my first major role, I would say that Papageno was the most unforgettable. I was 26, and I was just flying. There was such a great atmosphere. I was in the mood to continue rehearsing all day long. In Moscow we used to rehearse until midnight. Here, everything is by union rules. I would always like to sing in a new production because you can create it, but the speed is now so fast. Rehearsals are maybe one or two weeks. I would like to sing Hamlet and more Verdi roles. And I would very much like to perform in Armenia.

Though you were born and raised in Moscow, did you spend any time in Armenia? Are there any special childhood memories, and how did you receive the name Rodion?

My father was Armenian from Baku and my mother is Russian. My father and relatives moved to Yerevan from Azerbaijan, then my father, who wanted to be a translator in English and German, relocated to Moscow where he met my mother. My family wanted my name to be original. Rodion was a Greek saint, a relative of Saint Peter, and my maternal grandfather's name was also Rodion.

The memories I remember most are when we were together as a family, the warmth we shared. My father was a great cook and taught me how to make kebab and dolma with cabbage and grape leaves, which I love. I spent very little time in Armenia, mainly for summer vacations with my paternal grandparents when I was a child.

How do you compare musical training between Russia where you trained and the United States? Are the singing and acting lessons in Russia more precise, more disciplined?

In Russia, it is more tough because it is hard to advance if you do not work very hard and diligently. But in the United States, it's easier to find the recordings, the scores. In Russia, I studied acting not singing, but still it was very strict and involved much hard work. You start studying at nine in the morning and finish at midnight. Basically you lose your whole life and live the life of the artist. But we were so fanatic about it. Also in America there are strict union rules for time. For the singer it's good. As an actor, one doesn't have to worry about his instrument. I can act even if I'm tired, no matter what the temperature or condition, but for singers it's impossible. You have to be healthy.

> "There is always fear, maybe adrenaline is a better word. If you don't feel this, you are empty," says Pogossov.

And what is your formula for staying healthy? Do you have a diet or exercise regimen? How do you keep your vocal chords strong?

I exercise in the gym two or three times a week. Or I exercise in my hotel room by lifting two telephone books or a liter of water. (Laughing, he simulates the exercise). My greatest fear on stage is losing my voice or forgetting the words, especially losing my voice. My vocal chords are my most precious instrument. So it helps not to go outside naked in minus 15 degree weather. I love the sun, so if it's 90 degrees at the beach, I do go naked. (Another hearty laugh).

You are such an accomplished actor. Who in the acting world do you admire?

I'm not such a good actor. And to be honest, there are a lot of singers who are better than me. I need a good director to blossom. He can discover something I don't know about myself. I'm not one to use the same trick for every production. And you know with the tricks you can get more laughs or response from the audience. More interesting for me is to discover the technique for each role that I play. Of course, I love the system of Stanislavsky and Mikael Jackoff, and I have read their books. But it's hard to connect this with the opera world. In opera, it's simple. Either you love, hate or are jealous. Then you have to bring out the real feelings, so it's not a mask. For me it's very hard to meld the acting with the singing, to make it balanced. Also in large theatres like the Metropolitan, people don't see your face and especially your eyes. That's a great pity for me.

I start from the eyes in every role to understand the look of the character – soft, wise, or evil, or whatever, and then it goes to the body. It's like throwing a stone in the river with the ripples then forming. The more you involve your physicality, the less space there is for your psychological process. So you have to relax the body so you can be alive. And when the opera ends, you come out of the role and become yourself again.

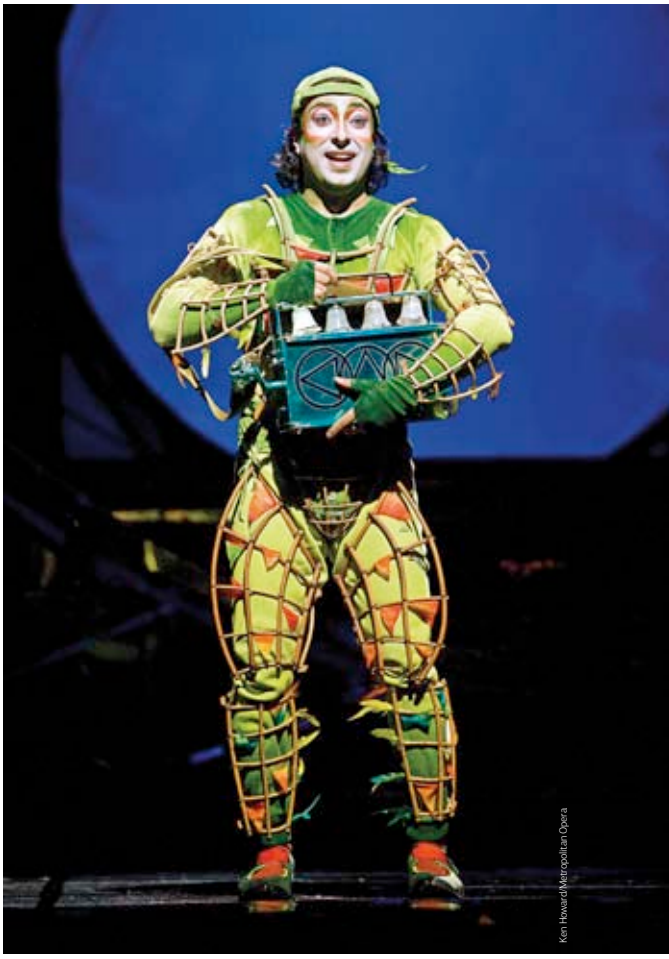
And what are your plans for the future? Where would you like to sing where you haven't already?

First of all I want to develop for myself as an artist, as a person. We learn every day. I take lessons from a teacher at the Met, Mark Oswald, who sang for 15



Cory Weaver/Metropolitan Opera

↑
Rodion Pogossov as Figaro, and Colin Lee as Almaviva in Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia."



Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

→
Rodion Pogossov as Papageno in Mozart's "The Magic Flute."

years here with James Levine. Of course, the professional theatres are wonderful with great organization and colleagues. They are like an atomic bomb. I'd like to sing at La Scala.

Do you regret anything about choosing the singing and acting fields? What are the disadvantages that this kind of career has on your personal life? And what do you do for fun?

I have a close personal friend who also is an opera singer. It's hard to manage because she also performs, and we don't see each other for a long period of time. And sometimes you want to be at home to take a break from your professional life. For fun, I have wonderful friends in Russia, all actors. We studied in the same school. And I also love other music. I used to listen to all this alternative music, but now not so much. You know, I went from Nirvana to opera, such a big step. I also like to read books about philosophy, psychology because they are part of my profession. I would like to read more about painting, of which I don't understand anything. I love museums and go often.

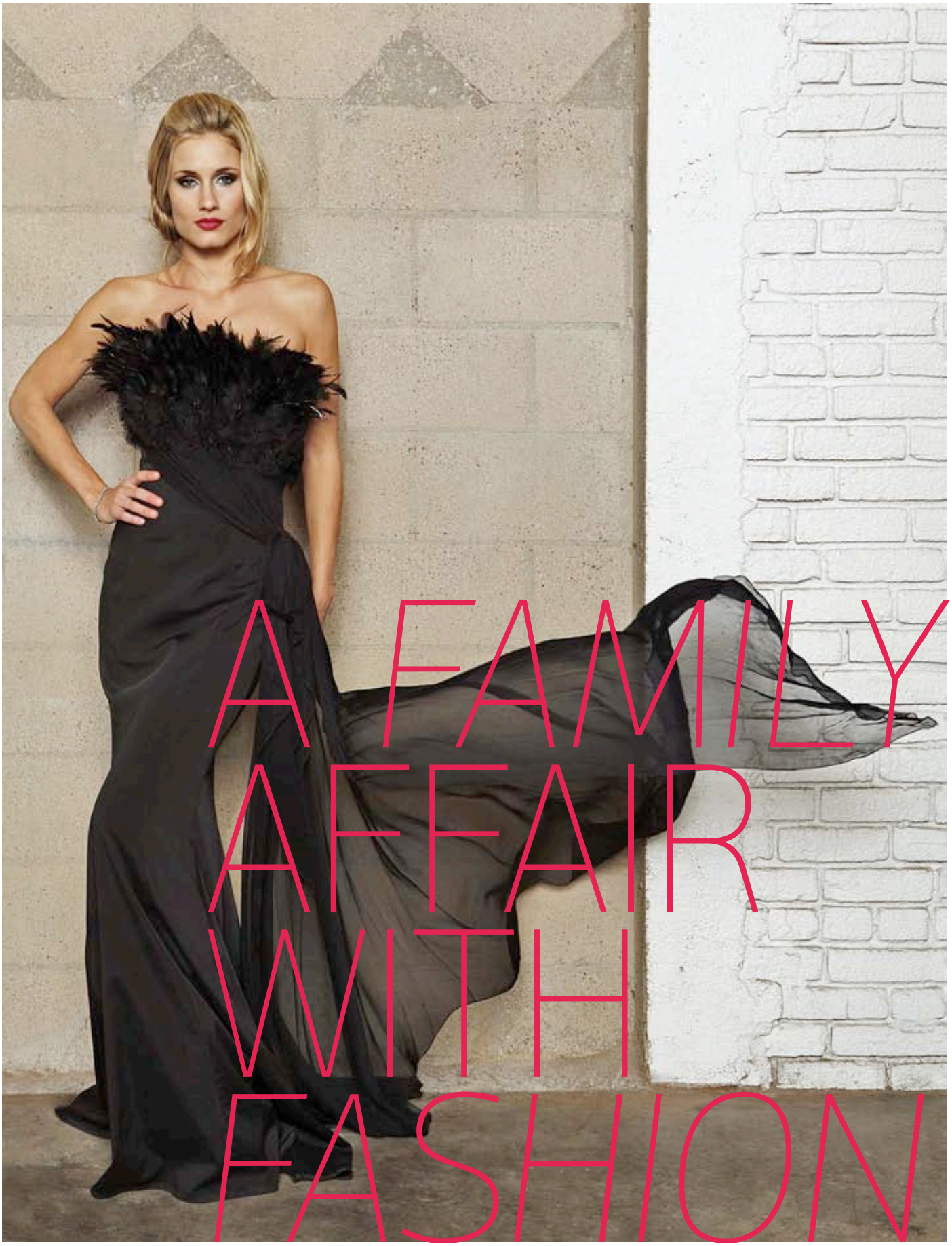
What is the definition of success for you, and do you consider yourself to be successful? And for you, is the glass half empty or half full?

Success for me means being honest with yourself, doing what you want and can. And in the end it's the audience that is the barometer of your success. You know, you can be very successful in the shower. There I sing better than Caruso. (A hearty laugh). I'm lucky that I became a singer at such a young age and found myself. If you enjoy this profession and it brings you happiness, that's everything. Of course, happiness also involves good health and a happy personal life. I would love to have a family and children. I'm 33 years old, and the years go by very fast now. For me, I'm basically an optimistic person, definitely not negative. There has never been any organization that has helped me in my career. I've accomplished this on my own, and with help from some singers and my friends. And of course, though I'm not very religious, I believe in God whom I know has helped me.

Who is Rodion Pogossov as an artist and as a person? And do you consider yourself Russian or Armenian?

Wow, what a question. Now I am still developing my character, my life. Of course, some roots are the same. The more you go forward, the more you are changing. I am mainly an artist. Maybe a bad boy because it's the current style to say so. People like it, because if you do a stupid thing, they think 'Oh, what a charismatic person he is.' I'm sure if I did something naughty on the stage, I would be very charismatic. But basically I'm very normal.

Rodion Pogossov considers himself a globalist, a mixture of everything, perhaps because he travels a lot, but mostly because he thinks of himself as half Russian and half Armenian. And even though he doesn't speak Armenian, he misses his childhood in Armenia. When he came to America, he went to the Armenian Churches in Douglaston and Little Neck, New York, and was very moved. And he hopes in the future to perform in Armenia. ■



A FAMILY AFFAIR WITH FASHION

The appeal is glitz and glam to the bone in a way that's classic rather than trendy. Think Versace on a budget, Studio 54 era sequins, curve hugging flow and handcrafted rhinestones, making any woman wearing Nicole Bakti the center of attention. Although her business was started only 15 years ago, Aida Gharakani's signature aesthetic is instantly recognizable today in our most coveted retail stores such as Neiman Marcus. "My success was not handed to me on a silver platter. I have slept on rolls of fabric, worked 24-hour days and 7-day weeks. While my kids stepped up on chairs and hung tags on dresses after school, my husband traveled to meet with buyers. This business grew because of the love and dedication a fourth-generation family of designers has for fashion and each other," says Aida. Today her designs are sold in more than 2,450 stores worldwide. Aida built her eminence with nothing more than family and a talent. Nicole Bakti was only a dream; a dream that seemed far-fetched then, but is now a reality.

Text **Sauline Kojababian**





Aida!" yelled one seamstress. "Phone call on line one, Aida," shouted a secretary. "Aida, I need your help," asked her husband quietly. The hustle and bustle of a design house was apparent from the moment one enters the 13,000 square foot space nestled in Monrovia, California. At Nicole Bakti, inspiration boards cover the walls, fabrics line the floors, and draped mannequins are there to greet you at every corner. The sound of sewing machines buzz as Aida gets ready to showcase her latest collection.

"All my dresses are made in the USA. We use imported fabrics from Italy or trim from Paris, but we design, cut and manufacture here," she says proudly. The first dress Aida ever designed was worn by the well-known Armenian singer, Noune, for her album cover. Other celebutantes like Paula Abdul, Suzanne Somers and Viveca A. Fox have dazzled in Nicole Bakti for red carpet events. Within the last ten years, Aida has dressed contestants for all U.S. state pageants. Her designs have also been seen on a gaggle of television shows including *Dancing with the Stars*, *Deal or no Deal*, and *The Real Housewives of New Jersey*, *Beverly Hills*, and *Orange County*.

Her mother, Alis Hamboian, whose parents were both designers, works closely with Aida, handling the technical aspects of dressmaking such as draping. "My grandparents migrated in the 1940s from Lebanon to Armenia. My grandmother taught patternmaking and my grandfather designed handbags," says Aida. Moving to the Unites States in 1976, Alis started sewing and designing at an Iranian fashion company and making custom dresses for the clientele. As she grew older, she pushed Aida to start her own business in evening wear. "At the time, I was working as a head designer for Tadashi making really good money. My mom would call me and tell me to quit my job daily. To be honest, I was just so scared. But I knew I wanted to start my own thing. Nicole Bakti was

established with no investments and no start-up money. For the first two years, we didn't have an income. Whatever we made would go right back into the business to buy fabrics, hire models and pay costs." Within the first year, the company made $1 million. Despite the fact they had no office, no models and just a few sample dresses, the retailer Cache gave Nicole Bakti a grand head start. "Cache wrote the order right then and there. I didn't even have enough funds, fabric or trim to fulfill her complete order," says Aida. Keeping it within the family, Aida named the company after her niece Nicole. A recent school graduate, Nicole is also following the family tradition and working to create her own contemporary sportswear line called Bakti. "At the time, Nicole was the only girl in our family, so we shortened her last name from Baktarian and gave birth to Nicole Bakti. She grew up in my office and has been helping us design since she was a little girl." Her husband Sako, whom she met while they were both students at Otis College of Art and Design, has worked for companies such as Guess? and Kenneth Cole as head merchandiser. "It's been 12 years since he came on board. Everyone here has a role as part of the family and the work team," Aida says.



"I AM ALWAYS LATE TO EVERYTHING; THEREFORE IF I DESIGN SOMETHING SO CLASSIC, I WILL ALWAYS BE IN STYLE."



Aida Gharakani
Fashion Myths Debunked

On Pleating —
"One thing that people misinterpret is that pleating makes them look bigger, but in actuality pleats make you look 10 to 15 pounds skinnier."

On Color —
"Do not be afraid of certain colors. Any color will look good as long as you put an outfit together correctly."

On Trend —
"Just because short dresses are in style, doesn't mean everyone can wear them. When it comes to fashion, it's about what flatters an individual figure. For example, if you are short waisted, long jackets do not work. I am 5 feet tall; I can't wear floor length gowns no matter how trendy they are."

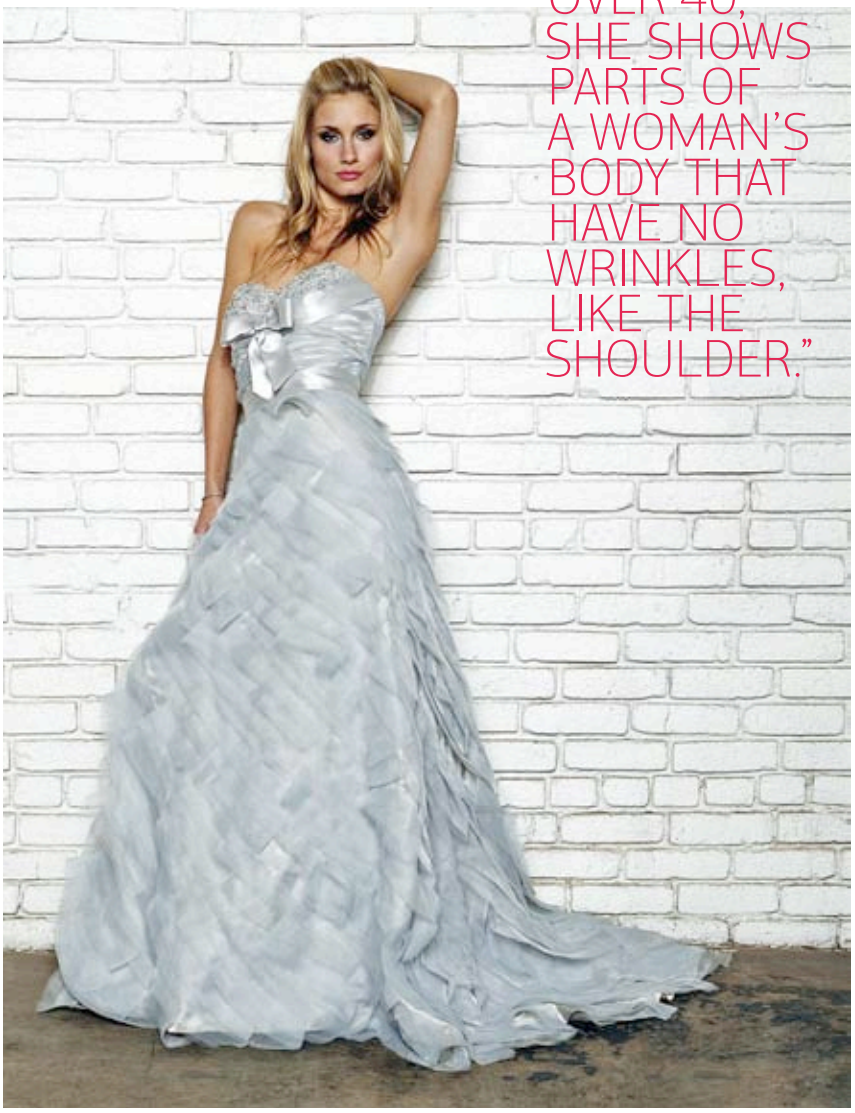
"When I design, the most essential aspect is being in the right mind at a specific moment. I am inspired by listening to music, seeing amazing fabric or trim, looking at Versace archives or maybe having a great dream. Most of my creations come from my mind rather than sketching or outside influences. I feel when I look at what my competition is doing I get confused, and my mind doesn't run free. It's been exactly five years since I looked at magazines to see what's trending in fashion," Aida confesses surprisingly. Aida's personal style differs from the designs she creates for Nicole Bakti. She has studied the Nicole Bakti woman for many years and knows exactly who she is almost like an alter ego. When designing, Aida embodies her consumer by imagining what they like to do on the weekends to how they like to wear their hair. "I have customers who want us to re-cut dresses they bought 15 years ago," she laughs. Designers like Valentino and Halston inspire Aida, while her personal favorites are Jean Paul Gaultier, Moschino and Madeleine Vionnet, who was known for introducing the bias cut (accentuates body lines and curves) to the fashion world.



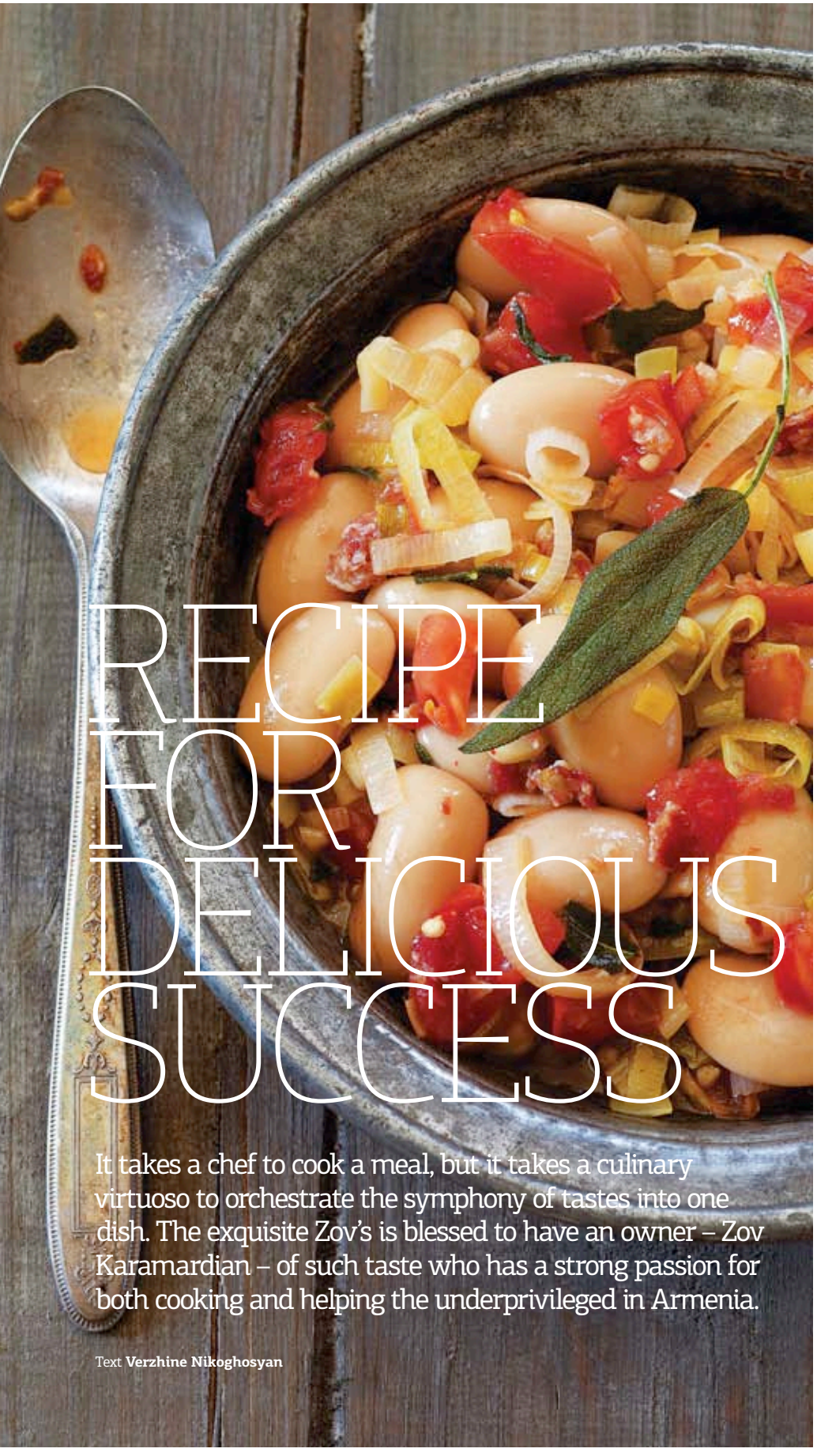
The Nicole Bakti customer isn't shy by any means; she appreciates her body and exudes confidence. She has grown with the company and has introduced the brand to her daughters. "Our style is very classic, sexy and elegant. Lately we are doing shorter dresses and adding more color to the collection," Aida says. The way a dress feels and fits can instantly boost a woman's confidence. Nicole Bakti designs are made of the highest quality fabrics imported from all over Europe and Japan. "Novelty fabrics are fun, but a good base fabric like satin, jersey and ponte never go out of style," she says. Aida uses unique fabrics like Odessa, which is known to hide imperfections and feels luxurious to the touch. Triacetate, which can only be made in Japan, is used frequently to keep her dresses perfect for evening occasions that require a lot of sitting. Triacetate is a modified acetate fiber with greater resistance to fading, wrinkling and shrinking. While most dress designers use plain silk taffeta, Nicole Bakti dresses are made with memory taffeta which eliminates natural wrinkle prone areas called smile lines. Recently, the family launched a division called Aida (pronounced A-eeda) that sells to every door where Nicole Bakti is sold. The line has a "ladies who lunch" theme with a more sophisticated feel. The dresses are feminine, lacey and conservative. The company has a bridal, cocktail and prom division as well. Caught off guard by the huge prom market at first, nearly half the business is now geared to proms.

The fashion industry landscape is always misunderstood as being for people who didn't want to get a "real" job or chose fashion school because they simply did not want to study.

"I ADMIRE DONNA KARAN FOR WOMEN OVER 40; SHE SHOWS PARTS OF A WOMAN'S BODY THAT HAVE NO WRINKLES, LIKE THE SHOULDER."



"People think going to fashion school is such an easy thing to do — it's quite the opposite. I would do homework till 5:00 a.m., shower and go to class the next day. It taught me discipline because everyone is working on strict deadlines. Isn't that essentially what the real world is all about?" she questions. The artistic eye for fashion has been passed on from generation to generation within the Nicole Bakti family. A sense for design runs through their veins as they continue to expand externally and grow closer internally. "We are very tight knit at Nicole Bakti; one person's problem becomes everyone's problem. Before we were a business, we were a family," she laughs. ■



RECIPE FOR DELICIOUS SUCCESS

It takes a chef to cook a meal, but it takes a culinary virtuoso to orchestrate the symphony of tastes into one dish. The exquisite Zov's is blessed to have an owner – Zov Karamardian – of such taste who has a strong passion for both cooking and helping the underprivileged in Armenia.

Text **Verzhine Nikoghosyan**



It all started when she was in her teens. "My mother would call me when I got home from school, and she would explain over the phone what she wanted me to cook and how to prepare certain dishes. I would go and buy the ingredients and would cook dinner," said Zov Karamardian, the owner and founder of the Zov's restaurant chain.

It was then and there that she decided cooking was going to be her career. The path from learning how to cook over the phone to attending the culinary program with Julia Child was not easy or glamorous but possible. "I was literally mesmerized by her," said Zov about Julia Child.

Julia has been an inspiration, a mentor and a good friend for her, but it was her love for cooking that drove Zov to explore different dishes, mixing them with Armenian tastes and flavors.

She moved to Orange County after getting married, and worked from home while raising her two children. She catered events from her home for a long time, but then she had to make the next step forward.

"Once my children started driving, I had to make a decision whether this was going to be me working out of the house or a professional career. So I decided to move out of the house." She found a gift shop for sale in a nearby center and convinced her husband to purchase the site. "I looked around at this whole center, and I started designing the restaurant in my mind. And that was the beginning of my story," she said.

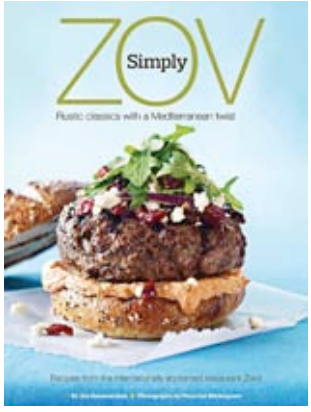
The restaurant was opened in 1987. The area was only 1,300 square feet, but it





soon grew not only into a restaurant with different rooms but also into a chain. It was never a glamorous life for Zov. The restaurants are the product of her hard work and perseverance. She would drive to downtown Los Angeles from Orange County at 2 a.m. to buy her produce, come back, cook, and be ready to greet the guests in the morning.

"I will be 70 soon and I am working harder than ever, but I am very passionate about what I do. I love to cook, and I love to teach. I have published two cookbooks now, and they're doing very well. The first one is *Recipes and Memories From the Heart* and the second is *Simply Zov*. People love the books. That means everything to me," she said.



← Karamardian's second recipe book, *Simply Zov*

Being Armenian is not only reflected in her food but also in her life. She has been a supporter of many Armenian causes such as the Paros Lighthouse Foundation, an Armenian charitable foundation in the U.S., for which she raised $25,000. She has also been a strong supporter of the work done by the Plasticos Foundation in Armenia, collecting approximately $30,000 for the volunteer doctors who travel to Armenian orphanages to operate on children with cleft palates. The Armenian Relief Society is also on her list of charities along with many others.

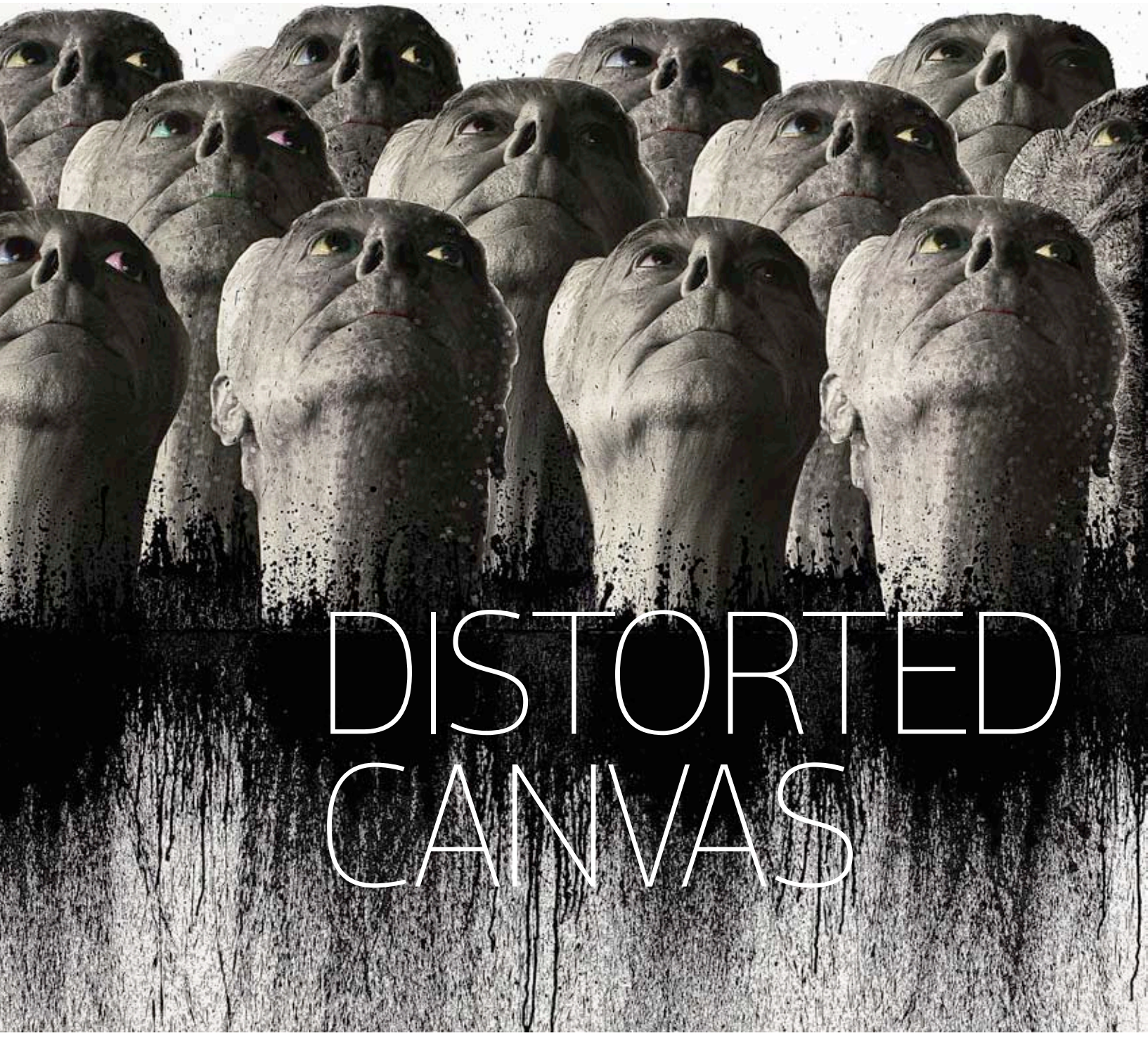
Her daughter Taleene and son Armen are in business with her, and Garbis Karamardian, Zov's husband who retired recently, has also joined the family business. The original restaurant in Tustin has now grown into 12,000 square feet and includes different banquet rooms. In addition, she has expanded her business with two new restaurants called Zov's Neighborhood Café and Bar, one in Newport Coast and the other in Irvine.

Zov considers herself a teacher, and as a chef/restaurateur, she regularly conducts cooking classes at her own restaurants or venues like Sur La Table.

She has received a number of awards. The prestigious Angel Award from the James Beard Foundation was given for her "independent vision, dedicated support, and significant contributions" to the culinary world. She was named California Chef of the Year by the Governor's office, Restaurateur of the Year by the California Restaurant Association, Chef of the Year by the Southern California Restaurant Writers, Business Woman of the Year by the Orange County Business Journal, and Business Women of the Year by the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). She received the Pace Setter Award from the Roundtable for Women in Food Service, was selected as a Woman of Valor by the American Diabetes Association, and was awarded the Profile In Excellence Award from the Executive Women's Forum of Newport Beach. Her restaurants have been praised by many national culinary magazines including Bon Appétit and Food & Wine, countless television shows including EXTRA, KTLA Morning News and Good Day L.A., and the Food Network recognized Zov's bakery as one of the nation's best. Among all this, Armenian food for Zov is her background, her history and who she is.

"I think Armenian food is one of the best in the world – I love it. It is absolutely exquisite because it is so balanced. In order to get the flavors you have to know how to combine the spices and the amount of the portions," she said.

Incorporating her love for this food with the flavors that the locals enjoy makes her cooking so unique. People from different countries and backgrounds equally enjoy her international menu. ■



DISTORTED CANVAS

Shiny, black acrylic peepholes in the shape of pentagons, discarded swatches of denim placed near pieces of yellow jean pocket interlays, glimpses of newspaper copy, and dashes of blue and orange paint. This collage of recycled items is entitled, "Bernanke Looks to Keep Rates Low," and demonstrates Kaloust Guedel's mindset as an artist who works among the headlines, such as the economic state of the country: "I do not want to draw flowers in a traditional way, and in a sense of rebellion, I choose collage."

Text **Nare Garibyan**

Kaloust Guedel, a self-professed news junkie, enjoys following daily news headlines and incorporating, "the hidden and partially visible text within an area of mixed materials, such as acrylic paint and fabric; I don't decide which words to include from the newspapers; I include the pieces and then work with the words that happen to be on the canvas." He transcends the walls of the canvas, distorting the smooth edges and tightly fitted corners. A piece entitled "JFCA" represents the American Flag, with the red and white stripes seeming to be in motion, set on a diagonal, and combined with strips of faint newspaper headlines. The top right corner contains the flag's blue field, interspersed with brilliant spots of white, suggesting the white stars. Black acrylic paint with a ribbon like quality is placed alongside the red and white; the strips bundled together toward the edge



Tigran Tovmasyan

← "All Men Are Created Alike" mixed media, 50x56 inches

→ "Taped 3" mixed media 48x30 inches





↑ "Taped 1" mixed media 48x30 inches

→ "Taped 2" mixed media 48x30 inches



"I APPROACH ART BY DECIDING WHAT I WANT TO EXPRESS, THEN I CONCENTRATE ON TRANSLATING WHAT I WANT TO SAY INTO A VISUAL EXPRESSION. I NEED TO FIND MY EXPRESSIVE VOICE, NOT COMPARING MYSELF TO OTHERS," SAYS GUEDEL.

of the distorted canvas. The title of the piece was pulled from the newspaper text that happened to appear on the canvas, creating a sense of incongruence as the title is not related to the American Flag. Guedel's signature –blotches of paint, usually in red, orange, or blue pigments also appear in the collage.

Kaloust Guedel takes the concept of the borderless canvas even further by completely removing the image from the canvas and creating free standing presentations. The "Ultimate Bundle" showcases this approach, which includes the image of a man carrying a cumbersome load, again composed of recycled materials and found objects.

One of Kaloust Guedel's themes revolves around the idea that, in his words, "humans either voluntarily or involuntarily find themselves in bondage or become trapped." In addition to recycled items, Guedel uses colored tape and literally wraps his compositions in a state of bondage, leaving the viewers to explore the artwork and create their own perspectives and meanings in association with the work. Guedel utilizes color sparingly because color is in fact an optical illusion;



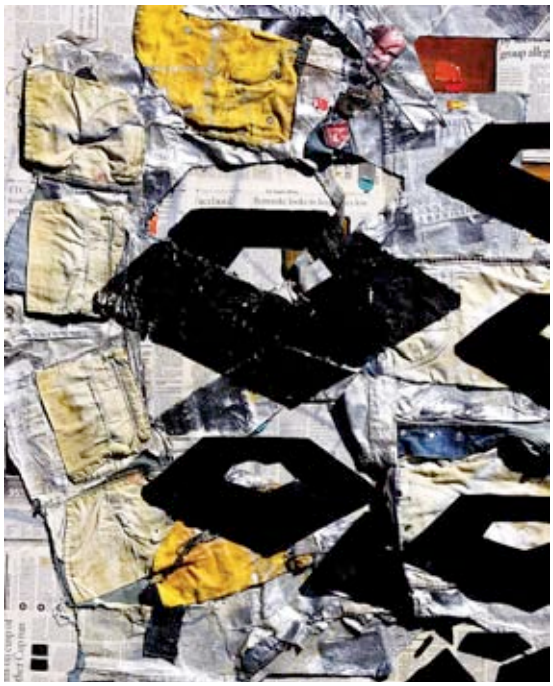
→
"JFCA"
mixed media 61x34.5x5 inches



it presents the surface of an object as a mere reflection of light. He says, "If you want to go beyond the surface, you have to avoid color." Nonetheless, the color present in Guedel's work is purposeful, adding weight to the commentary that is found in his work about human society. Similarly, he comments that, "beauty is not comprised of the outer details, what is enjoyable to the eye; instead beauty is the harmonious blending of all the inner components and parts of the object or subject that is seen by the viewer."

Kaloust Guedelekian was born in Cyprus in 1956. As a teenager he lived through the Lebanese Civil War and learned the art of restraint by staying indoors away from the chaos on the streets. However, this did not hinder his imagination as he began to read poetry, draw and paint. At age nineteen, Kaloust emigrated to America and settled in Los Angeles where he began to evolve as a painter and develop his identity as the artist, Kaloust Guedel. He did not attend an art academy and instead concentrated on finding his sense of self; "I knew I would find myself. I had a sense of confidence." Kaloust attributes his maturity as an artist to his early childhood experiences and his fervor to learn through self-knowledge. In his formative years as a child and





↑
"Bernanke Looks to Keep Rates Low"
mixed media 40x32 inches

←
"The Ultimate Bundle"
mixed media 80x54x24 inches

↓
"Tiled"
mixed media 36x70 inches



2009 Curated Exhibition

The "Man's Inhumanity to Man: Journey out of Darkness" exhibition began April 4, 2009- May 8, 2009 at the Brand Library Art Galleries organized as a part of the City Of Glendale's Annual Genocide Commemorative events. The show featured 40 artists who create art in the Southern California area; the genres included photography, sculpture, painting, and mixed media. Ramela Grigorian Abbamontian, PhD in Art History co-curated the show. Abbamontian and Paul Von Blum, a UCLA Professor contributed essays to the show's catalogue. Various themes regarding the inhumanity against mankind perpetrated by mankind was the focus of the exhibition.



Brand Library Art Galleries, in Glendale, California are housed within the Brand Mansion and Brand Park estate that was built in 1904 by Leslie C. Brand. The mansion was converted into a library in 1956; a gallery and recital hall were added in 1969 and became a hub for the arts.

"BEAUTY IS NOT COMPRISED OF THE OUTER DETAILS; INSTEAD BEAUTY IS THE HARMONIOUS BLENDING OF ALL THE INNER COMPONENTS AND PARTS OF THE OBJECT OR SUBJECT THAT IS BEHELD BY THE VIEWER."

teenager, he lived in various cities, Nicosia, Kirovakan, Baku, and Beirut, which widened his perspective on life. He says, "We are influenced by two things, our genes, from which there is no escape, and our experiences." Before he delved into finding his artistic voice, Kaloust studied the concepts of philosophy and psychology, which are evident in his work. Viewers are challenged to explore their own philosophies and inner worlds when encountering a Guedel piece. The culmination of Guedel's self-exploration has led to the understanding that, "art is about nature, light, reflection, juxtapositions, and composition."
Another theme, found primarily in Guedel's earlier pieces, is that of the Armenian Genocide; "I found it to be my duty to use my painting as a means to express my emotions about the Armenian Genocide." A series of paintings dedicated to the theme of Genocide showcases a different style. Instead of the current use of recycled materials, Guedel used paint and realistic human form to express his feelings about a horrific human condition, a crime perpetuated by mankind against mankind. In one piece, "All Men are Created Alike," there is an elderly man, his eyes pointed upward and his mouth closed. The same elderly man repeats in three rows for a total of thirteen images in the canvas. Each bust, however, is different, with slightly varying tones of gray skin and unique eye colors. Toward the edges of the canvas, the elderly man's neck seems to be planted into the ground within a black pool of paint. Another work entitled, "Kisses from the Dark Side of Mars" features the repeating self-portrait of Kaloust Guedel, organized in successive rows. The main focus of the work is the distinctly facial features; the center of the canvas collapsing into a black abyss. This piece was the featured cover of the New American Paintings 15th year Anniversary Edition catalog in 2009. Guedel has further explored the concept of genocide by co-curating two exhibits dedicated to the subject, "Man's Inhumanity to Man: Journey out of Darkness," in 2009, at the Brand Library Art Gallery, and in 2003, "From Ararat to America: Armenian Contemporary Artists," at the Forest Lawn Museum, both in Glendale, California.
Kaloust Guedel has also enjoyed exhibition success in various galleries in Los Angeles, New York, Beijing, and Seoul. On two occasions, he has showcased his work in Yerevan, in 2005 at the Yerevan Modern Art Museum and in 2011 at the Artists Union Gallery. The 2011 exhibit was a group show organized by the Ministry of Diaspora and the Artists Union of Armenia in honor of the country's 20th Anniversary of Independence. That same year, Elisabeth Sussman of the Whitney Museum, New York and Charlie Manzo of the Gagosian Gallery, New York, featured Guedel's work in shows they curated. Manzo showcased two of Guedel's pieces at the LA Art Association's Annual Exhibition, "Distinct by Design." Earlier this year, the renowned art critic, Dave Hickey presented Guedel's work at the 18th annual Texas National 2012 Exhibition. Guedel continues to learn and allows his mind to remain open, without boundaries, in order to create great pieces. Throughout his artistic path, Kaloust Guedel has confirmed that "you have to approach art from what you want to express." ■



A Different Breed of Charm

Picture this: A 21-year-old decked out in a three-piece suit, fedora and all, rolls to a stop at a small suburban coffee shop in his Porsche. Felix Ryan could charm any female eager to meet the next "it" guy in Hollywood. But this gentleman just may be a different breed of charm.

Text **Violet Kanian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**

During our interview, Felix Ryan's moral character becomes apparent as he springs to the aid of a very elderly woman who is having trouble getting out of her car. Without hesitation, Felix is up and next to the woman, helping her step onto the sidewalk. The talented actor, however, exudes a very different personality when it comes to taking on various roles for the small screen. Felix says that he loves playing the "badass" characters – a guy with guts and his own brand of fierceness, all while eliciting sentiment and sympathy from his audience. He recently successfully tackled this very role as a guest star in the *Mentalist*. Aside from his many other guest starring roles, Felix is regularly seen on the hit show *Power Rangers Samurai*, playing Spike Skullovitch. He even demonstrated his character's signature, an impressively loud laugh, proud at having mastered it. "I drove my mom crazy doing the laugh over and over again until it was perfect." Felix doesn't beat around the bush when it comes to talking about his craft. "Acting classes aren't important. Someone can't teach you how to act," says Felix.

Felix Ryan successfully tackled the role of guest star in the Mentalist. Aside from his many other guest starring roles, Felix is regularly seen on the hit show Power Rangers Samurai, playing Spike Skullovitch.

"You just have to have it." The confident 21-year-old was actually discovered at a studio where he took dance classes. The studio had an annual showcase called the Best New Talent Awards where agents from various talent agencies would come to scout for new talent. Although dance was his main focus, Felix was scooped up by Richard Delancy, who is now his manager. "Back then I had a pretty big accent,"



Felix Ryan
Born July 5, 1990 in Yerevan, Ryan has appeared on countless shows. From *90210* to his recent *The Mentalist* episode, Ryan plays every character with dedication and conviction. Some of his other guest appearances include shows like *Victorious*, *Unusual Suspects* and *Nip/Tuck*. He can regularly be seen on the children's series *Power Rangers Samurai*. Ryan's next role will be in the feature film *Broken*.

remembers Felix. "We did all these tongue twisters. I did a lot of extra work. I work pretty hard; that's why I am where I am and I'm just going to keep moving forward." About five years ago, Felix knew he was ready to start auditioning and working toward his big break. Though, he hasn't left the dance world behind. He says that he always tries to incorporate dance into acting, if possible. "I see myself now more of an actor than a dancer," explains Felix. "If someone were to ask me 'Are you a dancer?' I would say no, I'm an actor who can dance." Felix gets his creative side from his father, Armen Ryan, who is an international dancer practicing Armenian and Italian dance forms. However, he gets his charm from his grandfather, whom he looks up to for inspiration. Felix started driving merely two years ago. He recalls how his grandfather always drove him around to every audition he had. This was a way for Felix to spend time with the person he loves most. "I have his name, so it was like Felix 1, Felix 2 everywhere we would go," remembers Felix. "My grandfather got to know a lot about this industry. I think he's one of my biggest inspirations. I love when he smiles; I love when I book a job and he has tears of joy. It's the best experience ever." However sweet Felix may come across, make no mistake: Felix enjoys playing the villain. He says that at some point it's good for an actor to be typecast in the industry. Although Felix doesn't have limits to what roles he can play, he wouldn't mind being stereotyped as that tough guy character. On set, he doesn't like to think about anything other than his role and likes to remain in



"My grandfather got to know a lot about this industry. I think he's one of my biggest inspirations. I love when he smiles; I love when I book a job and he has tears of joy. It's the best experience ever."

character, even off camera. Surprisingly, having no time to rehearse is a plus for Felix. He says that the more he does something, the more it feels like a performance and the further he gets from really being in the character's shoes. At an audition for the Mark Wahlberg film, *Contraband*, Felix was up for the role as Wahlberg's younger brother-in-law. The scene called for an anger-filled performance and that is exactly what Felix delivered. "I was getting mad and I stood up and hit the wall," laughs Felix. "The casting director was so stunned, but I got the call back." Unfortunately, another actor beat out Felix for the prominent role, but challenges are what drive Felix every day. He says that everything is a challenge, and it just depends whether or not you're up for it. Felix thrives on the competition in the industry. He says that if he's going to do something, he wants to compete against the top people because that would give him the assurance that he is where he is because he's competed with the best. Felix enjoys working on the *Power Rangers Samurai* set in New Zealand because of all the stunts he gets to do – which can sometimes be a challenge since he is gravely afraid of heights. "It's really, really crazy and fun," recalls Felix. "The adrenaline – where else are you going to run on a gigantic gum ball 50 feet in the air while it's rotating? I didn't think about my fear, I just did it." Playing a role on such a popular show comes with a duty. Many people grow up watching *Power Rangers* – whether it is the original rangers, the ninjas or the more recent samurais. Felix realizes how extremely fast time flies as he is now acting on the set of one of his favorite childhood shows – certainly a surreal moment. He also knows greeting fans is a part of his job and doesn't take it for granted. "They support us, so we have to support them. These kids memorize our lines!" says Felix. "I've done a couple of signings here and there since I can never say no to a fan. They basically make your career." Felix is definitely a ball of energy. He says that he even has some of his Power Ranger character's traits. "There are times I get this random energy and I have to just scream and go WOO! It doesn't matter to me what people think, I'm just me," says Felix. "You just have to be yourself and have fun. I think that character is a bit of me." Although it's not certain yet that the ever-so-crazy Spike Skullovitch will be back on the show next season, Felix Ryan fans have something else to look forward to. He recently finished work on a feature film called *Broken*, possibly out later this year. In the film, a teenager contemplates suicide while a devil and angel guide him through his thought process. Of course, Felix plays the devil and loves every minute of it. However, he says the message of the film is for teens to not narrow their options down to suicide and to keep living their lives. Aside from the glamorous life of filming movies in Tennessee and other locations, Felix shows how big his heart truly is through all of his charity work. He says that ever since his family started a jewelry company years ago, they have been donating proceeds to charity. "I've seen a lot of things in my life and that's why I can never complain," says Felix. "I've seen a lot of kids and what they've been through. Who am I to say that something is hard? I try to help them because they help me and support me. It's the least I can do." Felix wants to be a good role model for his young fans. The legally of-age actor doesn't smoke or drink alcohol and definitely doesn't mess with drugs. His grandfather and parents raised him with a strong moral compass and taught him to pay attention to the more important aspects of life. Felix is not keen on making his charity work well-known. He says that you shouldn't want to give to charity just so people know you're doing it. Felix believes it's about integrity and not about getting congratulated for something you should be doing anyway. He loves working with Save the Children, which he names as his favorite organization along with the Red Cross. Recently, after seeing their commercials on television, Felix has been working with the Humane Society for Animals also. When meeting people who want to be in his shoes, Felix tells them to always be themselves. He says that he doesn't like to give too much advice because people don't really listen. "They listen, but they don't do it," says Felix. "I think you should just find your own path, from your own experiences and do your own thing." Felix may be charming and confident, but he doesn't have a typical Hollywood, over-blown ego. "I have no reason to have an ego," explains Felix. "I'm going step by step and succeeding, thankfully. I have no reason to think 'Hey, I'm the big guy and I think highly of myself.'" ■

Yerevan Marriot Welcomes Contest Winners



In 2011, *Yerevan Magazine* launched a Facebook campaign to reach 10,000 "Likes." One lucky fan of Armenia's premiere lifestyle magazine would win a free round trip for two to the country – along with hotel accommodations to the countries most opulent hotel, the Marriot.

With over 40,000 "Likes," in January 2012, by a random drawing, Evelyn Demirchian from Fresno, California was the lucky winner of *Yerevan Magazine*'s inaugural social media contest.

The excited Demirchian – who had never been to Armenia before – took friend Kristin Livanis along for the journey, and Marriot and *Yerevan Magazine* were there to document it all. Demirchian and Livanis arrived in Armenia on June 14, and after a relaxing night of sleep at the Marriot, they began their trip.

"Kristin and I went all over the country. We saw a good portion of Yerevan itself, from Erebuni to the Genocide memorial – Tsitsernakaberd," said an excited Demirchian. "We absolutely loved Matenadaran and could've spent an entire day there alone. Republic Square, where the Marriot was, led into so many fascinating parts of the city where we got to spend time soaking up the local culture and meeting with friends and family."

In nine days, the two friends managed an exciting expedition lineup entailing Garni, Geghard, Noravank. Khor Virap, Areni, Etchmiadzin, Lake Sevan, Dilijan, among other tourist attractions.

Zoltan Konsanszky, the Director of Sales and Marketing at Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan, was there along with his hospitable Marriott staff to welcome Demirchian and Livanis.



←
Kristin Livanis (left) and Evelyn Demirchian





←
Evelyn at the Erebuni Fortress

↓
Marriot's Zoltan Konsanszky and Anahit Tantushyan

↑
The girls at King Argishti I statue in Vartashen.





"Armenia is a beautiful living, open-air museum," says Konsanszky, who moved from Hungary three years ago to serve the Armenian Diaspora and its booming tourism industry. "There has been a very huge progress with the development as well as the experience tourists have had in the last few years. With Marriot, what we try to accomplish is for our visitors and guests to have a fairytale experience of the Armenia's hospitality, its trademark dishes, and the warmness that truly comes from the people's hearts."

"It's definitely a different feeling going to the motherland," added Demirchian. "You're among your own but it's an entirely different world. Yerevan is incredibly European."

Demirchian finished with gracious comments: "Both Kristin and I would like to thank *Yerevan Magazine* and the Marriot again for the experience, it was one of the most exciting trips we've been on. I'd go back to Hayastan in a heartbeat if I could."

If the stars align right, Demirchian could go again, all courtesy of *Yerevan Magazine* and the Marriot.

This September, *Yerevan Magazine* will launch its second annual "Win a Trip to Yerevan" contest. The contest will provide one lucky winner with a trip for two to Yerevan, Armenia. The contest will also provide wonderful prizes to various winners throughout the campaign, including a trip to Las Vegas and a chance to be published in an upcoming issue of *Yerevan Magazine*. Don't miss the chance to be part of the excitement, visit *Yerevan Magazine's* Facebook page for further instructions on how to enter. ■

The Man behind the Music



It was merely a coincidence when I stumbled upon a certain book two summers ago- or was it? An "-ian" ending name was all it took to get my attention, which then lead to my discovery of a successful music producer and songwriter. Thanks to his wife Stormie, a bestselling author, I had the opportunity to learn about Michael Omartian and his contributions to the music industry. With a background in music and a passion for railroads, Michael's story is just as inspirational as Stormie's book.

Text **Lilit Barsegyan** | Photo **Tanya Kechichian**

I was halfway through scanning a row of books at Barnes & Noble, when I found my finger running through titles as my eyes suddenly reversed direction. Realizing I had just skipped an Armenian name, I pulled out the book to confirm. It was the year 2009 when I came across an author named Stormie Omartian. Judging from her first name I doubted she was Armenian, but I assumed that she may be married to one. Sure enough, I learned that her husband was Michael Omartian, an accomplished music producer and songwriter. Fast forward two years later, and I have the pleasure of sitting face-to-face with Michael via Skype. I was fascinated listening to Michael share his four decades of successful experiences in the music industry from the Seventies to the present day. Having the opportunity to work with some of the most amazing artists such as late greats John Lennon and Donna Summer, Michael has had multiple Grammy nominations including three he won in 1981 for his work on



Christopher Cross' debut album. But it doesn't stop there; as a music producer, song writer and musician, his discography includes other remarkable artists such as Eric Clapton, The Jacksons, Rod Stewart, Shania Twain and LeAnn Rimes.

Michael's talent was obvious even at the age of four when he began playing the piano. "My piano teacher used to slap my hands when I would improvise," he recalled laughing. Born and raised in Chicago, he explained how for a student everything was either about classical or jazz. "It wasn't until the Beatles that I got into pop music." However, writing for a 220 piece orchestra in high school, Michael's future in music was clearly evident. The only problem was that he had a love for recorded music, and there wasn't much going on in Chicago except playing live in clubs. "Every time I picked up an album I'd always see 'Recorded in Los Angeles' or 'New York." Consequently, he made the decision to move to L.A. as a songwriter. Unfortunately, his parents were quite shocked when he announced he

Michael Omartian has worked with John Lennon, Donna Summer and has had multiple Grammy nominations, including the three he won in 1981.

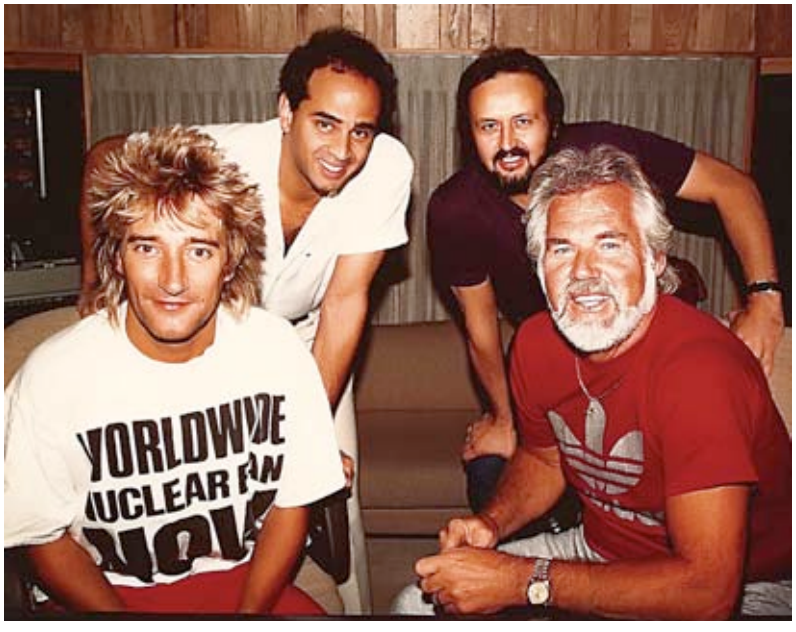
was leaving. Michael went to an Armenian Orthodox church in Chicago and was part of a close-knit family. "I'd walk past relatives' homes on the way to school," he says. The idea of a family member leaving that community was almost unheard of. After high school, he attended college, but realized it wasn't for him. Trying to satisfy his musical needs, he played in a few clubs but ultimately decided to pack his bags and leave. "I was just bored and needed something else to stimulate me. And so I got on a plane with a couple thousand bucks I had saved and headed to LA."

Arriving in Los Angeles in 1968, he befriended some people he met at a church in Van Nuys. "I was doing things for nothing, taking odd jobs, and finally I got a break three years later." Although he went in as a session player, he had higher aspirations. Michael's ultimate dream was to be a songwriter. A few of his stories from this period were rather entertaining: climbing a palm tree to get to the piano is something you don't see every day! This was one experience he shared about "a studio that was decorated like a scene from Hawaii" where Cheryl Ladd, one of the Charlie's Angels from the television series, was going to sing. Reminiscing about the good old days, Michael remarks, "It has always been a pleasure playing for Billy Joel and Barbara Streisand. And I was lifelong friends with Donna Summer; it is truly sad to have her gone."

Because Michael started in the music industry forty years ago, I was not surprised when he told me that he's fonder of the music from the 1970s and 80s. He refers to this time as the pre-computer generated music era. "Nobody gets into a room together anymore; they just send files over the Internet. You don't have the effort of a team working to get something done. This electronic era is losing flavor." Fortunately, Michael has found other modern forms of music that he can connect with on a deeper level. Music therapy and film music are his current passions. He has produced music to benefit the Music Therapy Program at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, a program he discovered when his son married a woman who had survived a bout with cancer at the age of twelve. Michael explained that his other passion – film music – attracts him because it allows him to go beyond three minutes, whether he's doing a score or assembling music.

Music is not Michael's only love. I knew this several years before our interview from reading his wife Stormie's book. However, it was interesting to hear Michael's side of their story. "Stormie, of course, was way too beautiful for me so I didn't even think she'd talk to me." They met at a church where Michael was called to do a session. At the time, Stormie was a TV actress and singer. She was one of the singers that day in church and invited Michael to her apartment because he was ill. "She said she would make a drink that would make me feel better. It was disgusting, but I don't know if that cured me or just looking at her did it." They lost touch after that but when they crossed paths again two years later, Stormie and Michael knew they were destined to be together. After getting married and starting a family, they moved from L.A. to Nashville, Tennessee in 1993. Now, as a loving husband and father, Michael is looking forward to grandparenthood. "My daughter got married in May. I told her 'Let's get busy! I want to have grandkids!'"

Michael never knew much about his own immediate family. After losing her husband and two children in the Genocide, Michael's maternal grandmother survived and subsequently married a Turkish man. "So I'm part Turkish," remarked Michael. "There was a pocket of secrecy in my family around that; the experience was so horrific I couldn't get the information." In more recent years, he was curious enough to do some research on his own. "I went to *Ancestry.com* and found out more about them now than when I was a kid." After hearing about his childhood, I could tell he was still just a big kid at heart when he mentioned a hobby of his. Glancing over his shoulder, he said, "I know this may sound strange, but I have in



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Michael Omartian in the recording studio with Rod Stewart and Kenny Rogers.



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Omartian turned his childhood dream into an adult hobby. Here, he takes his train out on the tracks for a test drive.

another room, here a large model railroad." Judging from his nonchalant manner, I assumed he had a toy train set. Little did I know it was unlike anything I could have imagined. When I opened the pictures he later e-mailed, I was astonished. Did I fail to catch a previous career he might have mentioned? Besides being a professional in the music industry as well as a devoted family man, how did he find the time for something that was clearly more than just a hobby? The pictures he sent me resembled professionally built railroads – the kind found in historic museums. He must have worked part-time at Griffith Park Train Rides when he first moved to LA.

I bombarded him with questions before jumping to any more conclusions. "My father, Harry Omartian, used to take me to the Chicago and Northwestern yards, and I would be mesmerized by the behemoth steam engines that would roll in." He says that as a child growing up at that time, there were only a few things to do: "Play baseball, ride bikes, build model cars and trains and play Cowboys and Indians." Building model trains was obviously his favorite. Michael built model railroads in every house he owned after getting married. "It wasn't until our current house, which we built, that I got serious and put some time into it." He explained that everything is handmade except the engines and various detail parts, such as doors and windows, which are available commercially. The tracks are hand laid, the dirt is real dirt, and the trees are built by carving balsa wood trunks with branches created from a variety of dried plants. For a better understanding of how impressive this hobby is, here is a scale and a few measurements he provided: the scale is ½ inch to the foot, the lumber mill is 8 feet long and one trestle is over 9 feet long and 38 inches deep at one point.

Model railroads and music production may seem to be a rather bizarre pairing, but it demonstrated to me how Michael's longevity in his career and success in life make sense. His hard work, consistency and patience are a direct result of his passion to build and create. ■

"Nobody gets into a room together anymore; they just send files over the Internet... This electronic era is losing flavor," Omartian says.



WHERE SMARTS MEETS STREET SMARTS

JACK BOUROUDJIAN, A POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJOR AT CHICAGO'S LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, HAD HIS HEART SET ON BECOMING A LAWYER. HOWEVER, ONE AFTERNOON, ADVICE FROM A LEGENDARY TRADER CHANGED THE COURSE OF THIS YOUNG MANS LIFE – WHO IN A MATTER OF TIME, BECAME A LEGEND IN HIS OWN RIGHT.

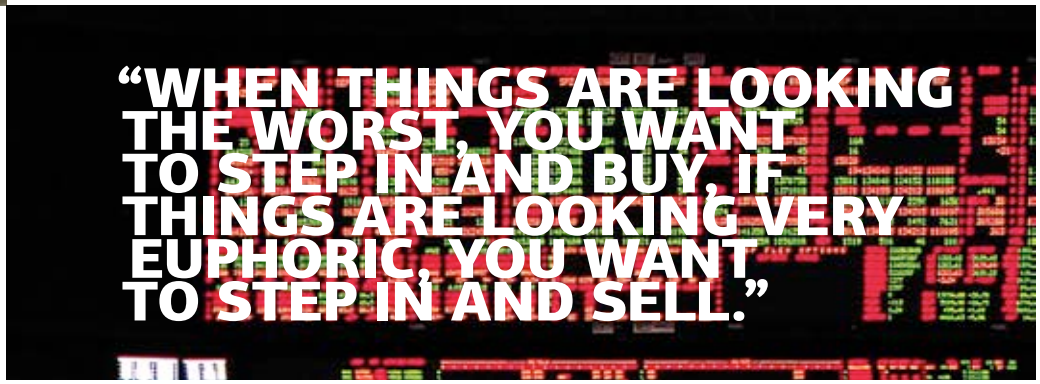
Text **Mery Khatchatrian** | Photo **Andrew Coffey**



Jack Bouroudjian's lifelong love affair with the market was sparked one fateful afternoon when he accompanied a friend who was visiting his godfather, the legendary trader and one of the wealthiest men in Chicago, Ralph Peters. His friend planned on asking Peters for a job, and Jack was there to keep him company. As he stood unsuspectingly next to his friend, Peters asked Jack what his plans were, and upon hearing his reply wasn't particularly impressed with Jack's legal ambitions. Peters voiced, "Don't even bother – get in the market. It's the most overpaid profession in the world." Being a man who recognizes a good thing when he hears it, Bouroudjian was intrigued. Doing some research sparked his interest even further, and Jack decided that Peter's advice was well-worth taking. He began working as a runner on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange for $68 a week as he continued his studies in the evening. When his parents moved to California, Jack stayed in Chicago, lived on campus and launched his career. He became infatuated with the market and decided to learn everything about it. He confessed, "Once you get it in your blood, it's very difficult to do anything else. Getting involved was very easy and gave me an interesting Chicago perspective to trading. They say that in Chicago you trade anything that moves."

With hard work and determination he moved through the ranks, eventually serving as senior vice president of Equity Futures for Nikko Securities, the second-largest securities firm in Japan and Credit Agricole Futures, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Credit Agricole, the 17th largest bank in the world. Bouroudjian was also president of Commerz Futures, a subsidiary of Commerz Bank in Chicago, the fourth largest bank in Germany. From 1996-2002 he acted as chairman and co-chairman of several educational product and regulatory committees; at the same time he sat on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange Board of Directors. During his term he was also involved in launching many of the CME Group's most successful products. Currently, Jack Bouroudjian is chairman of Bull & Bear Partners, a financial services holding company based in Chicago. He is the host of the syndicated program *The Jack B. Show*, which has over 150,000 listeners. In addition, Bouroudjian is a regular commentator on CNBC, author of *Secrets of the Trading Pros* and a columnist for *Townhall Finance*. In August, Bouroudjian started doing Market Update, a video feature on Open Markets for the CME Group, where he provides video commentary on the stories and ideas that most impact capital markets and the economy.

Being raised during the Reagan era, he admits that he is prone to seeing the world through rose-colored lenses, and he always sees opportunity. Bouroudjian





describes his market outlook as being a "PermaBull," because he remains optimistic and seeks to recognize opportunity, while others may be caught up in daily motions. Bouroudjian mentions that he had the great fortune of being mentored by individuals such as Bing Sung, the manager of the Harvard Endowment Fund, whom he met during the years he spent trading on the floor of the Exchange. One of the most important lessons he learned from Sung is " the idea of stepping back and looking at the market from 30,000 feet instead of being down there caught in the noise of it all, which helps and gives an objective view of things, especially when you get caught up in the emotions of the market. Thus you always see the opportunity at hand."

Leo Melamed, a financial visionary known as the Father of Financial Futures was another source of inspiration for Bouroudjian. Melamed was the former chairman of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, board member of the CME Group and its chairman. Sitting on the board for seven years next to Melamed taught Bouroudjian more than he could have learned from anyone else. Serving together on the strategic planning executive committee, Melamed and Bouroudjian were the driving force behind the success of the Chicago Exchange. They were both tasked with the planning and execution of the exchanges IPO spearheading the Exchange's transformation, making it one of the world's most significant financial exchanges. In addition, Bouroudjian served as the executive committee chairman of the Equity Index Committee. He can also be credited with the successful launch of the very controversial and, at the time, politically scrutinized launch of the E-mini contracts traded on the Chicago Mercantile Exchanges Global electronic trading platform.

His market outlook is influenced by his conservative political views, leaning toward the laissez-faire style of the free market capitalism. He finds Milton Freidman's style of investing provocative. Considering the notable changes he has seen in the market throughout the years, Bouroudjian says there are "simple rules that are never going to change." For instance, the 90/10 Rule: "90 % of the general public who trade their own accounts will consistently lose over and over again and 10% will make money. This pool is getting larger and larger. The rule doesn't change, but the pool of users is getting very global. We opened up the doors and made it a more level playing field and opened up the access to the rest of the world. This is good and bad – good because it gives everyone the power to do anything they want at their fingertips. Bad because there are a lot of predatory factors out there. Markets are notorious. Quite frankly, when people trade, they don't realize that there are no minor leagues in trading." He explains further, "You're going up against people who have traded for a living for 30 years, and chances are they know a little more than you do. It's this misunderstanding of what is necessary as far as knowledge goes."

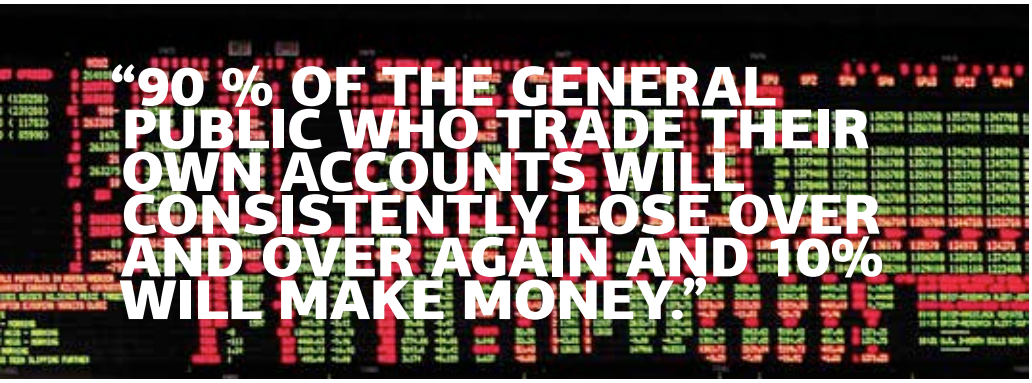
He also acknowledges the impact social media has had on the trading environment and the role individual bloggers play in offering opinions and creating a sense of "information overload." However, not all this readily available information is created equally, as some of it may be biased. He describes the best way to approach the markets as an art form, "The art is to synthesize and extract the information that one really needs. You have to be able to drill down to what is necessary and what's right and what can help you, rather than what is just noise and is going to make you drift." Bouroudjian is gravely serious when he warns investors to be mindful of the credibility of the information posted online.

Reflecting on the effects of traders' emotional and psychological state and a false sense of reality in which individuals may get caught up in Bouroudjian says, "When a market goes down, people are filled with panic and fear; however when the market goes up, there is a lot of greed and euphoria that goes along with it. That's one of the reasons that the general public ends up consistently buying the top and selling the bottom. They get caught up in the emotion and the noise, and worse yet, they get caught up in the rhetoric that comes from the television."

His strategy is "when things are looking the worst you want to step in and buy, if things are looking very euphoric, you want to step in and sell." He explains: "You want to be there and make the market based on those emotions that give you the best opportunity. It's important to step back and understand what is driving things.

←
Floor traders choose a badge acronym to identify them. Since HAG was already taken, Bouroudjian went with GOP in honor of his given name, Hagop.

For example, if the market is caught in a trading range, understand that the market should not be traded if you are in the middle of the trading range; whereas, if you trade the lower, upper end of the range it is much easier to have a higher percentage trade. For me, it is more a question of market understanding. Once you understand the market's psychology, you can give yourself a good feel for the rest of the fundamentals." Bouroudjian also offered his outlook on the current political and economic environment: "There needs to be political change. If not this November, then change will be forced by the market place. The market has priced in a slow growth policy, and that's what's really driving the market."

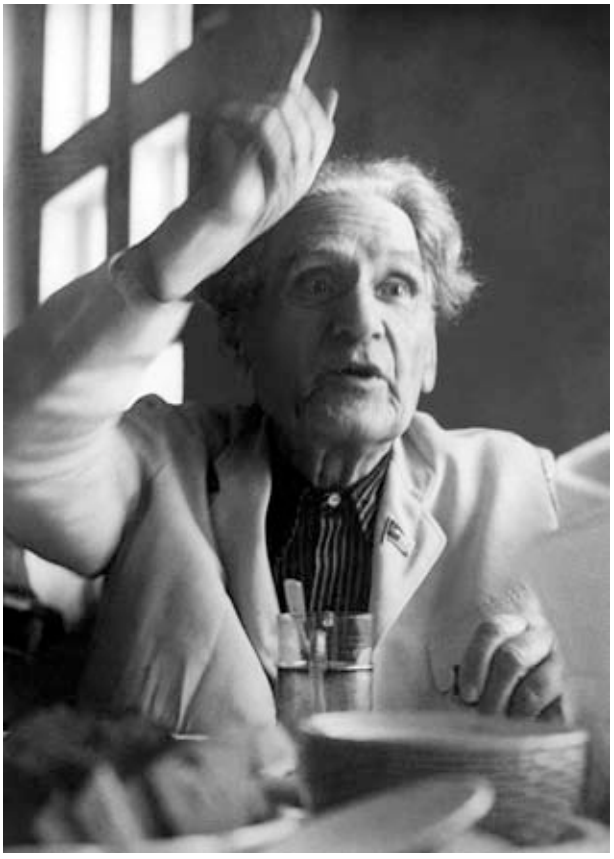


One subject that struck close to home was a discussion regarding a blog post on his website about his son calling from college and asking if he would ever be able to find a job. Bouroudjian has some advice to offer recent grads. "What I tell my son and others who have just graduated is – stay in school. The job market is very soft, so you might as well get a secondary degree. If you are going to look for work, find a job in a field that is growing." For instance, he says, "Right now, unfortunately, there are people graduating with liberal arts degrees who are not going to qualify for many jobs nor will they have a one-up on others when it comes to the job market. If you are graduating with an engineering degree, the job market is a lot better." He wouldn't recommend anyone "getting into the financial markets anymore, because of the over-regulation that is hanging like a black cloud over our heads; it's going to make it more difficult to go out and accumulate wealth in that way." He believes that there are many regulatory changes the financial industry faces, which are being pushed by individuals who do not have a clear or even a mediocre understanding of the implications of these changes. "The Dodd-Frank bill is a killer for the futures business, unless there is some clarity." In his opinion "everyone tries to figure out where the disconnect is. These people in the administration think that they are the vanguard of the marketplace, so they end up with rules."

Bouroudjian suggests that young professionals should seek employment in growing industries. As he is a "big believer in startups," he counsels, "Right now if you are a young person, go to a startup. For me that is the best piece of advice to give somebody who is looking at the job market, trying to figure it out. If you think about it logically, that is usually when a business will succeed, because if you can get through the slow periods, it will more than likely be very strong during the growth periods." Bouroudjian speaks from personal experience on the matter. "It looked just as bad when I was going into college and Carter was President, and we ended up with Ronald Reagan. There is a good chance that there will be some kind of a pendulum swing from the redistributionist policy we are getting right now to a more pro-growth policy that will free up capital and create jobs." He believes that presently the workforce is "underutilized," and the problem these days is the "quality of the jobs being created, which do not foster an entrepreneurial spirit. Anyone who is going to hire someone has a lot of regulatory clouds hanging over their heads. We are afraid to hire people because of the risks and uncertainty that follow."

Bouroudjian, a first generation son of Armenian immigrants from Palestine, grew up in an all black neighborhood in inner city Chicago. His grandparents, who lived in Tigranakert, were the only members of his family who survived the Genocide. They found refuge in Jerusalem where his parents were raised in the St. James Monastery. Being of Armenian descent, his last name translates from the Tigranakert dialect as "silk wool merchant." His ancestors were actively involved in the trading that took place along the Silk Road. Bouroudjian accredited his natural, almost genetically inherited passion for trading to his ancestors. Over the years, Jack and his wife have been generous with their charitable contributions to the Armenian Church in Chicago. To be more involved, the couple with their two children has moved closer to the Armenian community. Surprisingly, Bouroudjian admits that of his many accomplishments none has given him more gratification than his meeting with the President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev who visited Chicago to meet with the board of directors of the CME. Bouroudjian recalls, "Armenia was at war at that time, and the Armenians were protesting his coming here. I was introduced to Aliyev as Jack Bouroudjian, but I said, 'My name is Hagop Bouroudjian and I am an Armenian American.'" At this, Aliyev's assistant said, "We cannot shake you, Armenians, off, no matter where we go."

Bouroudjian's insights are the most sought-after during and after trading hours, as he has the ability to see the significance behind the moves. He is known for his direct and significant commentary and holds one of the most highly regarded reputations on Wall Street. ■



"The light of Armenia reaches us thanks to Martiros Saryan," said French poet Luis Aragon. "In time he should take his well-deserved place in history next to Matisse and Cézanne. Perhaps his place is higher than that as he is the painter of happiness."

Text **Haroutun Zoulumian** | Photos **from the archives of Zaven Khachikyan**

The Sun Worshipper


М
сарьянъ
1911.

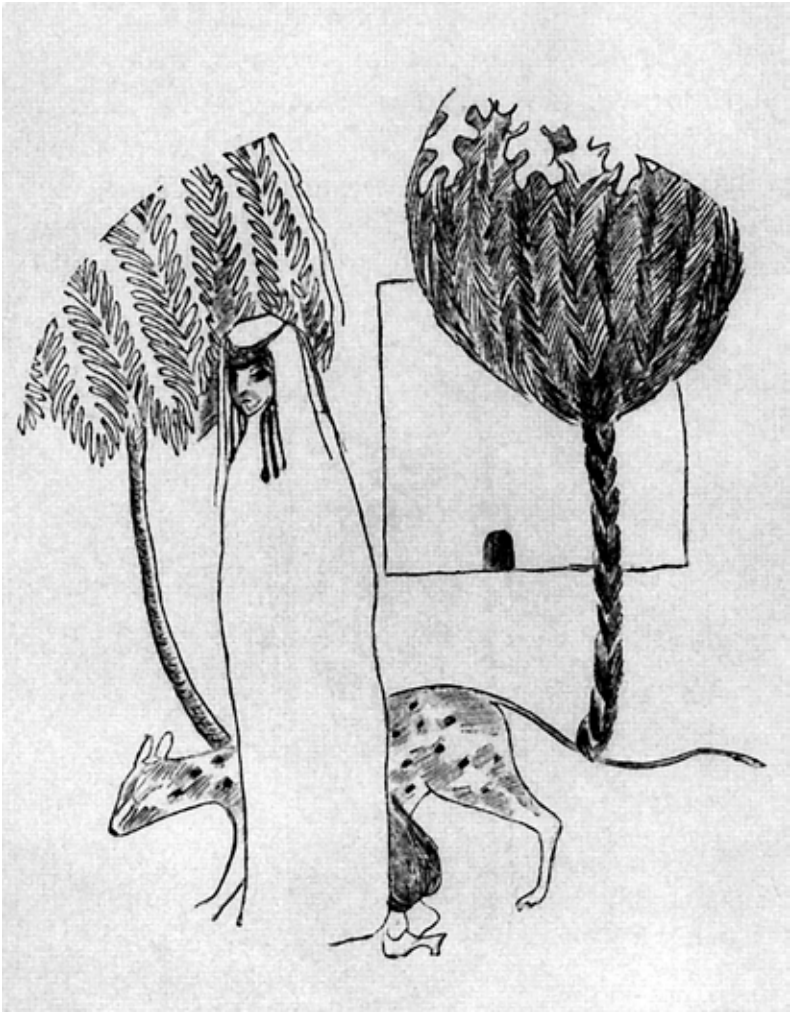
After the destruction of the Armenian capital Ani, thousands of its residents settled in Crimea. The hard work of several generations of Armenians turned this area into a blooming garden. Martiros Saryan was born here in a village near Sambek River on February 28, 1880. In this small settlement, he observed and fell in love with nature, realizing his unity with it.

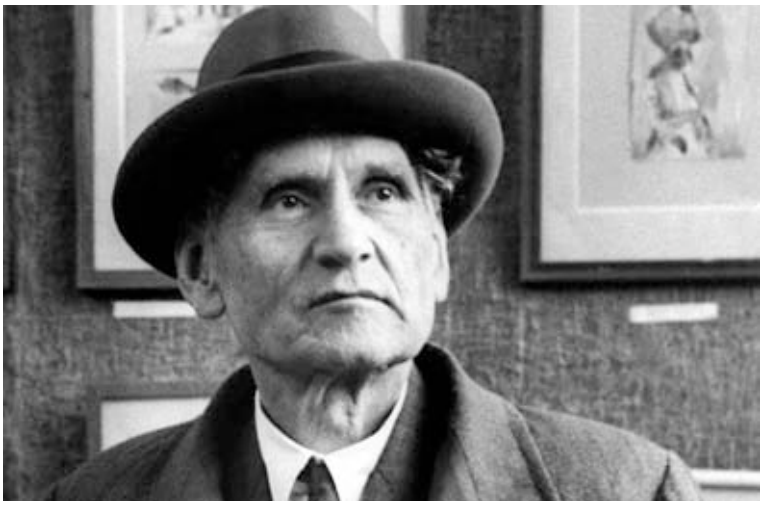
The boy soon relocated to New Nakhichevan (currently Rostov-Na-Donu, Russia), to live with his older brother Hovhaness. At the time, the city was one of the largest centers of Armenian culture. Martiros started drawing while still in school. After graduating from the city college, he started working for a magazine and newspaper distribution agency, dedicating all his spare time to drawing.

The artist recalled that period of his life: "There were quite interesting characters among the customers. I was spending more time sketching them than on my direct responsibilities, for which I was often reprimanded by the boss." One of these incidents became a life-turning point for Saryan when he secretly drew a portrait of a bearded old man, one of the office employees. The picture turned out well, receiving praise from everyone. The old man was the only one who didn't like it. The next day the man suddenly fell ill and was convinced that the reason for his sickness was the drawing. Once recovered, he complained to the supervisor, who had his own dislikes of Saryan's quirks. The supervisor tore the portrait into pieces, demanding that the latter stop his "inappropriate behavior." When Hovhaness, Saryan's older brother, learned about the incident, he sent the young man to Moscow to study painting. ▸

↓ "The Girl, Leopard and the Trees", 1907, Paper, ink. Vignette of the journal for the "Golden Fleece." Location unknown

→ "Love. Fairy Tales", 1906 Paper, watercolor, Saryan Museum, Yerevan





"Saryan's canvases reflect admiration toward love, toward the simple and true realities of life such as the earth, rivers, light, green grass, trees, fruit, water, wine – the truth itself."

— William Saroyan

"There is a philosophy of colors, stones, and buffalos in his paintings. This is not a copy of nature, this is a new world; Saryan's world."

— Ilya Ehrenburg

"I cannot imagine my life without Saryan's art. Saryan is a great pride of all the art, and of all the humanity."

— Dmitri Shostakovich

"It seems like Saryan's every landscape peak blazes and shines from within. His colors are most precious gems like emeralds and sapphires, rubies and agates."

— Pavel Antokolsky



And so the sixteen-year-old Martiros was accepted to art college. After graduating in 1903 and receiving his diploma as well as two silver medals (in recognition of academic merit), Saryan transferred to a special studio where his teachers were the prominent Russian artists Valentin Serov and Konstantin Korovin.

During this period in the summer of 1901, Saryan visited Armenia for the first time in his life, traveling to Ani, Echmiadzin, and Ashtarak. These visits made an indelible impression on the artist.

His first exhibition was the "Blue Rose," where he presented a collection of his paintings entitled "Fairy Tales and Dreams." From 1907 to 1909 he participated in a series of exhibitions called the "Golden Fleece," along with such luminaries as Konchalovski, Petrov-Vodkin, Cezanne, Matisse, Van Gogh, Rodin and Bourdelle. The famous collector Sergey Schukin visited one of these exhibitions. When he saw Saryan's self-portrait, he told the artist, "The work is exceptional, you draw wonderful portraits." He commissioned a portrait of his son on the spot. Schukin was highly regarded as a man of exquisite taste in the arts. Whenever he visited Paris, artists would hide their best works from him because he would choose their best painting and get it. Saryan realized that this portrait should be beyond ordinary and it turned out as such.

When he finished the portrait, he presented it at the "World of Art" exhibition held at the Literary Circle hall. At the opening ceremony he saw Serov, who was carefully examining the painting. Saryan greeted him, but Serov silently pointed toward the portrait exclaiming, "Gun! Two guns!" Serov meant the wide-open eyes of the young Schukin, which were staring unceasingly at the viewer.

Saryan had his own special approach to working on portraits. "A person wants to look interesting and handsome in the picture, the way they imagine themselves. When they come to me the first thing I see is that they are posing in front of me in spite of the fact that I haven't even started drawing. That is why I usually say, 'I am not going to draw today!' They are disappointed but they relax and act natural, the way they really are. The pretense all of a sudden disappears, and I can see them the way everyone is used to seeing them. I start drawing carefully by studying the models so that they are not aware of it. Throughout the process I talk to them about things that they are interested in and they remain natural, in their typical pose."



← (From left to right) Hovhaness and Martiros Saryan, and the artist Artsatbanian, 1897

Saryan met millionaire and philantropist Joseph Mantashev while visiting Yefimiya Nosova, a collector of Armenian miniatures. Mantashev immediately asked Saryan to draw his portrait. When the artist came to his home at the appointed time, he found Mantashev still asleep. Upon waking, the host came out of his bedroom in his robe, apologized and asked him for time to change. ▸

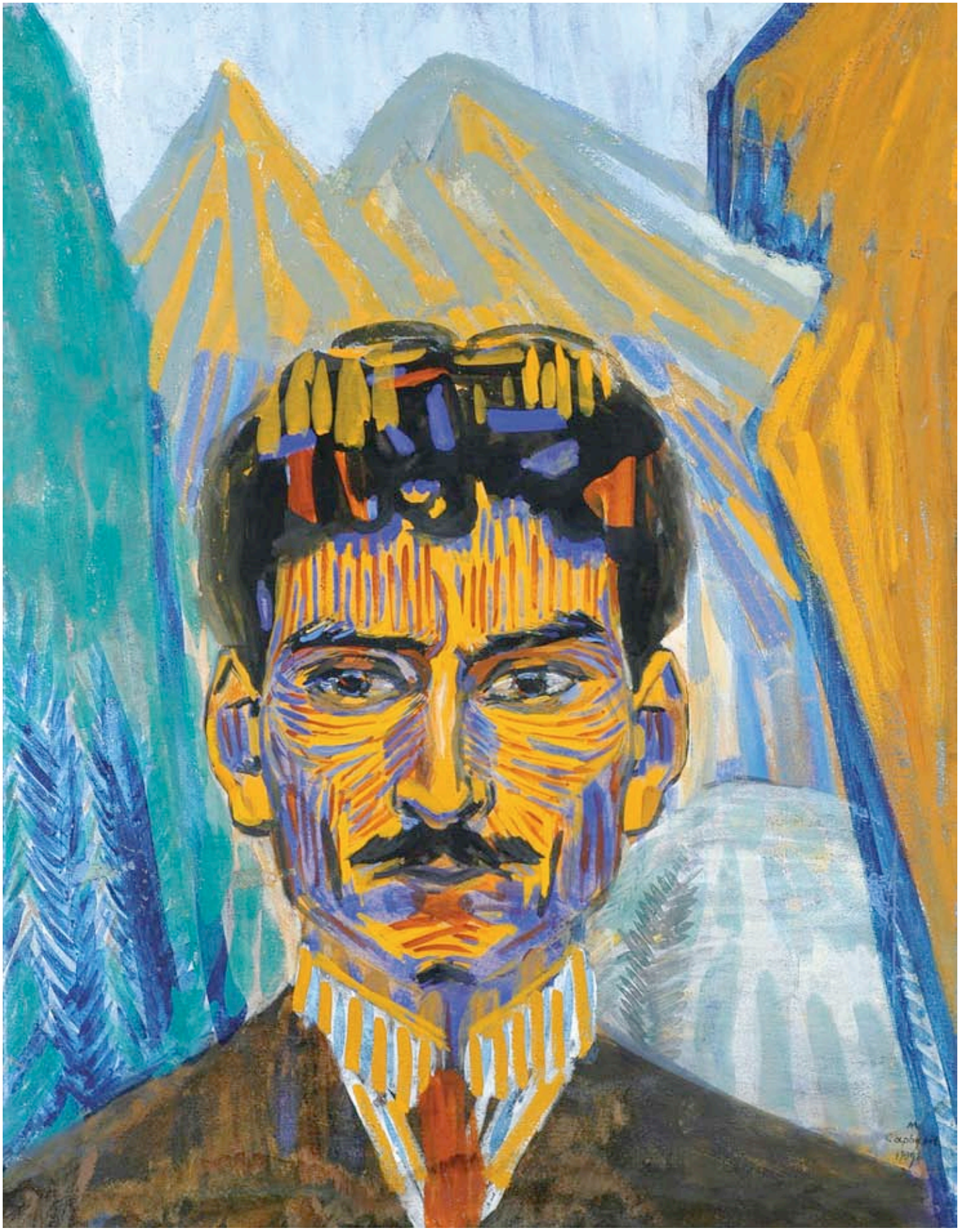
Saryan met millionaire and philantropist Joseph Mantashev while visiting Yefimiya Nosova, a collector of Armenian miniatures. Mantashev immediately asked Saryan to draw his portrait.



→
"At the well. Hot Day", 1908. Tempera on canvas. Saryan Museum, Yerevan

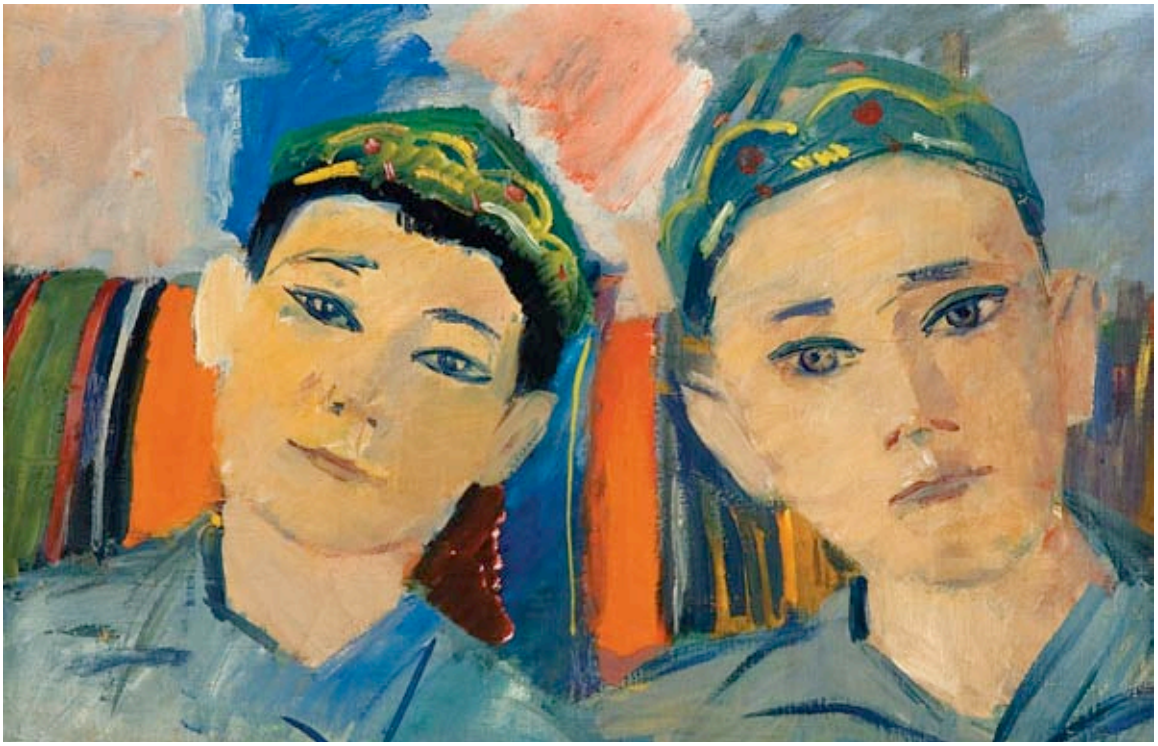


→
"Night Landscape. Egypt", 1911. Tempera on cardboard. The artist's family collection



←
"Self-Portrait", Sketch, 1909. Tempera on cardboard. Saryan Museum, Yerevan

→
"Zarik and Sarik", 1928, Oil on canvas. Saryan Museum, Yerevan



After the Genocide, Armenians fled from Western Armenia to Transcaucasia. The intellectual and elite took upon themselves the duty of helping the refugees. Martiros Saryan headed to Echmiadzin.

Saryan convinced him not to change as Mantashev looked better in a robe than in a European suit. The impression was so strong that Saryan offered to draw the portrait in Mantashev's absence. When the portrait was ready Mantashev asked, "Is it good?" Saryan answered modestly, "Not bad." The latter offered to pay a much higher price than originally agreed, but Saryan who had his own convictions, rejected the offer firmly. He later regretted this, because later when the tables were turned and Saryan offered to help the now bankrupt Mantashev, the former millionaire rejected the offer, citing Saryan's earlier gesture.

World War I forced many Armenian intellectuals to leave Russia, the Middle East and Western Europe to relocate to Tiflis, Georgia. Martiros Saryan was among them. Those were difficult times for everyone. After the 1915 Genocide, Armenians fled from Western Armenia to Transcaucasia. The Armenian intellectual elite took upon themselves the duty of helping the refugees. Martiros Saryan headed to Armenia, to Echmiadzin.

"The situation was horrible," he remembered. "All around the churches of Shoghakat, Hripsime, Gayane, around old Vagharshapat, up to the ruins of Zvartnots, there were sick and exhausted Armenian refugees."

The artist was deeply shocked by what he saw. When his friends noticed that he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, they urgently sent Saryan back to Tiflis. For a long time after that experience, he couldn't touch his brushes and paints. "During those days of suffering, with all my heart and soul I united with my people. If that feeling of motherland did not grow in me then, I wouldn't be the artist and person that I am today," he confessed.

Years later, when the Premier of the Soviet Union Aleksey Kosygin and other high officials visited Armenia, they visited Martiros Saryan in his studio. The guests surrounded the artist. After a long conversation, Saryan removed one of his paintings from the wall and presented it to Kosygin, "I have the pleasure of presenting you with the image of Mount Ararat, and I hope that you will return the original Ararat to us."

In October 1915, in a café called A Cup of Tea, which was the usual gathering place of the Armenian intellectuals in Tiflis, a bright-eyed and well-built girl with enticing laughter caught Saryan's attention. ▸



She was Lusik Aghayan, the daughter of the well-known Armenian author and educator Ghazaros Aghayan. They were introduced to each other and soon started thinking about marriage. Because Saryan lived in quite strained conditions, Lusik ordered two wedding rings with their first meeting date engraved on them, October 14, 1915. Shortly after, they were married in a small village church.

In 1921, the government invited Saryan to Armenia, and Martiros moved his family to Yerevan permanently. He founded museums, colleges and art studios, attracting many talented artists to Armenia. Saryan designed the national seal of the Soviet Socialistic Republic of Armenia. It depicted Mount Ararat in the rays of the rising sun. He created the magnificent stage design of opera Anush and illustrated many books.

In 1924, Martiros Saryan accepted an invitation to participate in the 14th International Art Biennale in Venice, Italy, where he met and befriended the famous Armenian writer Avetik Isahakian. The writer was so impressed by Saryan's pictures that he kept repeating, "He is the Armenian singer, the singer of Armenia!"

In the fall of 1926 Saryan traveled to Paris to study the art of the French masters, and after this trip his mastery reached an incredible depth. "I believe that Impressionism is a much greater discovery and not only in art. The most important factor in painting is the sun, light and color."

In January of 1928, the Charles Auguste Girard Salon in Paris presented Saryan's personal exhibition with 36 of his paintings mostly painted in Paris. In March, Saryan left Paris by train. All of his paintings were packed in boxes and sent by sea from Marseille to Batumi on the French cargo steamboat Firzhi. In Novorossiysk Port they loaded the ship with egg crates, and to avoid breakage they covered the crates with sawdust. The boxes containing the paintings were then placed on top, but the sawdust accidentally caught fire. All of his 40 paintings were ruined except for a very small fragment that survived the fire. The photographs of those paintings became as valuable as the originals.

Saryan's life was full of tragic events. One of them was the death of his son in a car crash. His art was misunderstood, and he lost many of his paintings in the fire. In 1937, they burned eight of his pictures in the basement of the Armenian Gallery. Those were the portraits of persecuted and oppressed individuals. They were going to burn the portrait

↑ "Armenia", panels, 1964. Oil on canvas. From the collection of the artist's family

→ "Lori", 1925. Pencil on paper. From the collection of the artist's family

→ "Aragats", 1928. Pencil on paper. From the collection of the artist's family

→ "Lori", 1925. Pencil on paper. From the collection of the artist's family

→ "Shirak, Leninakan", 1925. Pencil on paper. From the collection of the artist's family

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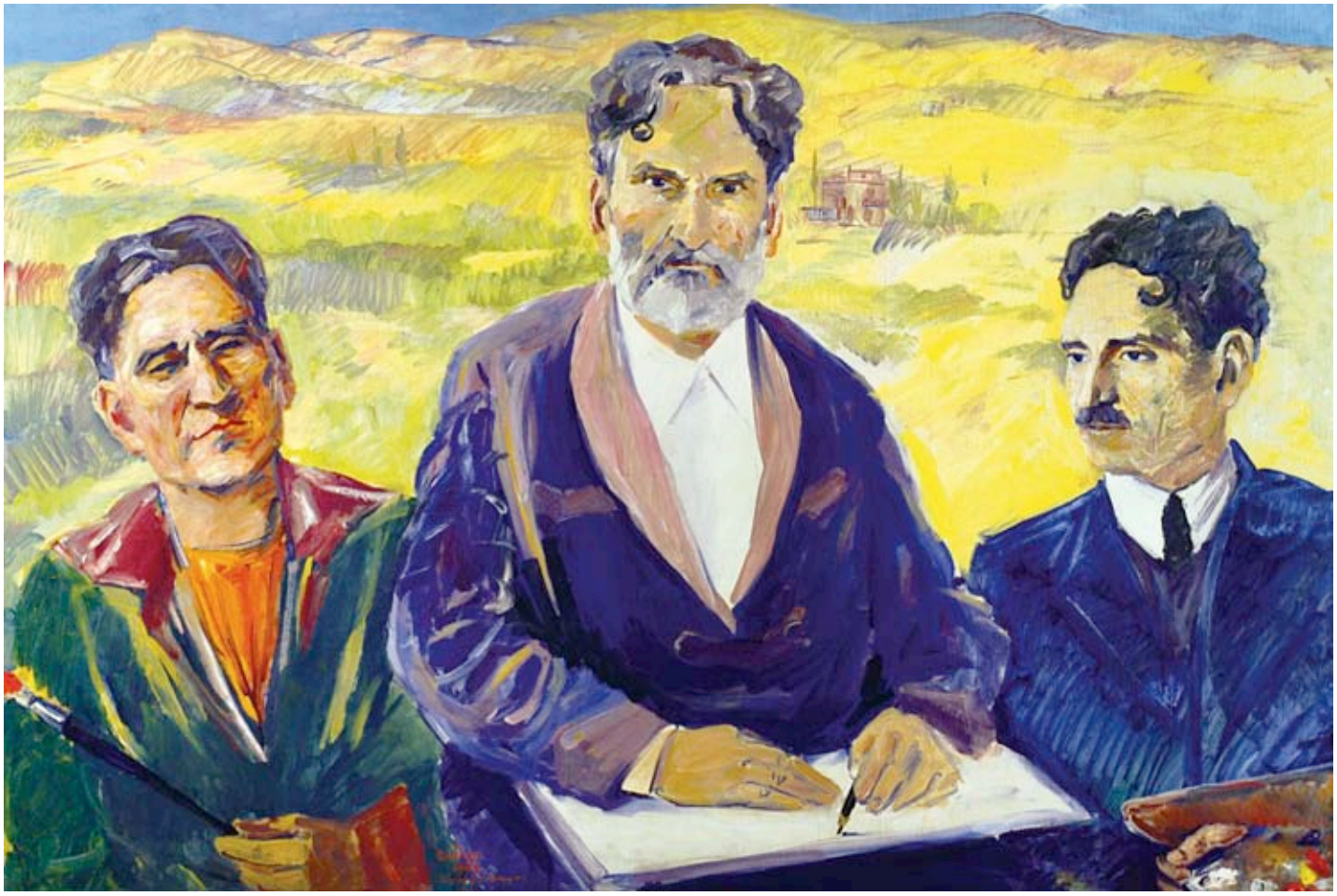

Saryan's life was full of tragic events. One of them was the death of his son in a car crash. His art was misunderstood, and he lost many of his paintings in a fire.

↑
"Self-Portrait. Three ages", 1943. Oil on canvas. Saryan Museum, Yerevan

of a well-known Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents as well, but some brave souls saved the portrait by hiding it in a basement.

Saryan immensely suffered the loss of his son. He fell ill and wouldn't leave his house. His good friends, Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and English composer and pianist Benjamin Britten visited Saryan after their performance in Yerevan Concert Hall. Rostropovich brought his cello, Britten sat at the piano and the entire program was performed once again exclusively for the Master.

When Russian cosmonaut Alexey Leonov, who also loved to paint, visited Saryan and saw the painting entitled "The Earth," he exclaimed in amazement, "You saw the Earth the way it really looks from the illuminator of the spaceship! How did you manage to reach such cosmic heights?"

Saryan could impress anyone with his insight. The American writer John Steinbeck visited Saryan during his trip to Armenia. In 20 short minutes the Master drew his portrait. Steinbeck was amazed, "How did you know that my ancestors were sailors?" he exclaimed.

It is often said that the mystery of Saryan's landscapes was not so much in his distinct mastery of technique, but in the uniqueness of Armenian nature. However, many other artists depicted Armenia in their paintings, yet none of them was able to portray Armenia with all its vastness, richness of shapes and colors like Saryan did. At his career prime he said, "At the end of my life I realized that I barely outlined the path, and now it is the perfect time to start working. Such beauty opened up in front of me. Almost as much as exists in nature." ■

EMIL KAZAZ



"Judith"
1995, bronze, 63x28x23"

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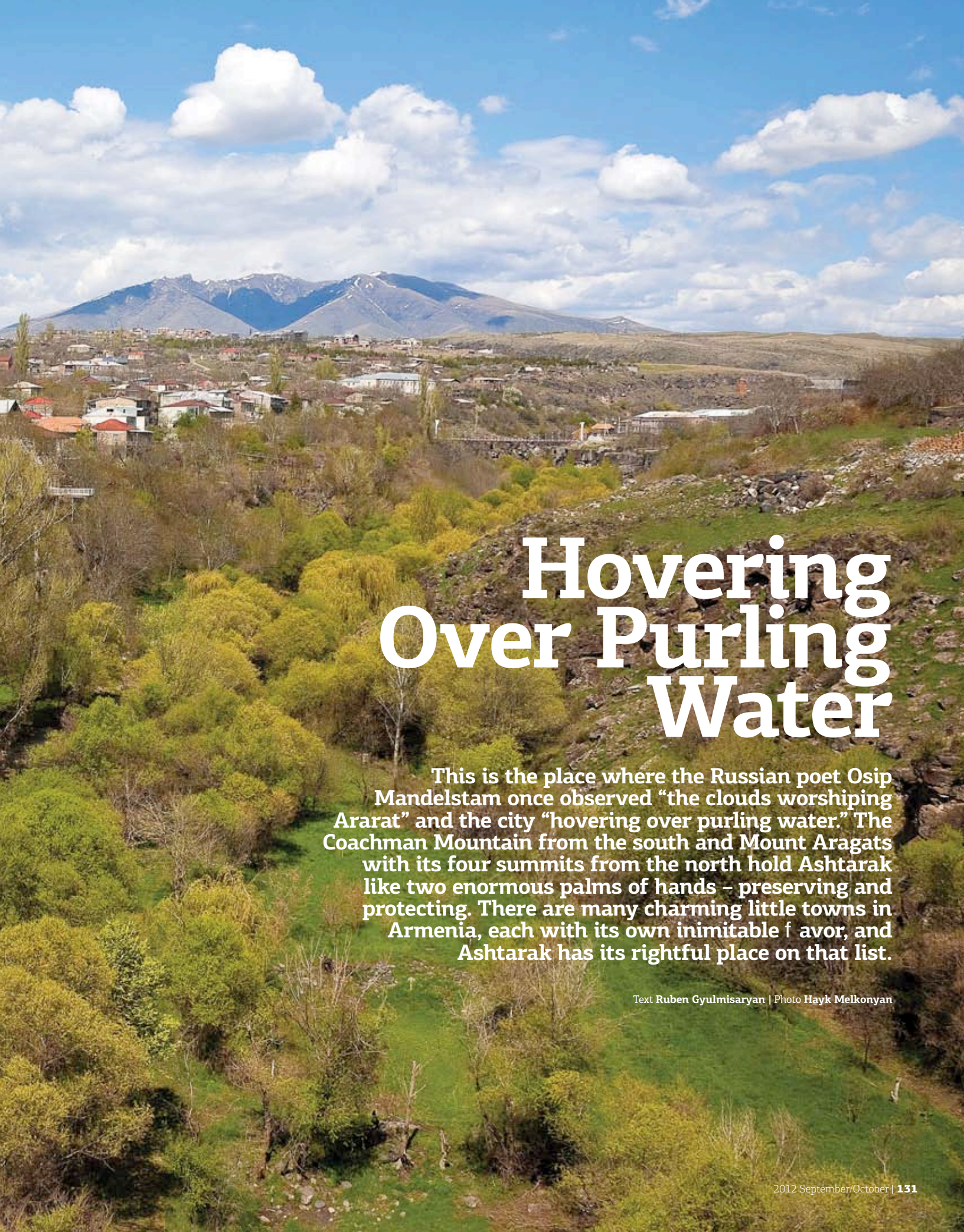


Hovering Over Purling Water

This is the place where the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam once observed "the clouds worshiping Ararat" and the city "hovering over purling water." The Coachman Mountain from the south and Mount Aragats with its four summits from the north hold Ashtarak like two enormous palms of hands – preserving and protecting. There are many charming little towns in Armenia, each with its own inimitable f avor, and Ashtarak has its rightful place on that list.

Text **Ruben Gyulmisaryan** | Photo **Hayk Melkonyan**

Tower Near the Capital

When you drive from Yerevan to Ashtarak, don't count on enjoying the scenery along the road. You simply will not have enough time to see anything. It takes only about ten minutes after passing through the city and its suburbs, then turning left where the main road leads to the two major cities of Armenia – Gyumri and Vanadzor, when you arrive at Ashtarak.

Ashtarak means "tower" in Armenian. We tried to discover the origins of such an unusual name by asking the locals. Their offered versions frankly were not very inspiring, nor were there many of them. First – the city at night looks like a flying saucer – round and sitting on a sort of dais; and second – if you look upward from the gorge of the Kasakh River, Ashtarak reminds you of a tower climbing up the slopes. Obviously, the first version was rejected outright and the second seemed too trivial. We decided to stay with the generally accepted view (in academic circles) that the name was given to the city because of the Akkadian goddess of fertility and love, Ishtar (Astarte), which somewhat correlates with the Bronze Age – the time when this settlement was founded.







A unique combination of the expected patriarchal character with a slightly disharmonious modernity is the main feature of Ashtarak – a city of orchards, restaurants and entertainment venues in the Kasakh Gorge.



Ashtarak, initially built on the right bank of Kasakh and now expanded to the left, is a cozy but distinct town. It is small but has everything needed – a bank, city hall and post office. It is mostly dominated by large single-family homes, but also has distinct and quite interesting features – colorful and charming old streets with ditches along the sidewalks and occasional piles of fresh cow manure on the pavement, merely a few feet away from the ultramodern offices of a mobile phone company.

Perhaps it is this very combination of the traditional patriarchal aura with a contrasting twist of modern additions that is the most interesting feature of Ashtarak, a town of orchards, restaurants and entertainment venues located in the gorge of the Kasakh River.

Under the Sky of the "Land of Ararat"

Recently, a beautiful new bridge was constructed to direct Ashtarak's expansion onto the left bank, replacing an ancient three-arch bridge located a couple of miles upstream that was built in the 13th century and rebuilt in the 17th century. Now there is practically no traffic on the old bridge, except for an occasional local who lives nearby. Frankly, it looks quite unsafe for driving and is now just a historical landmark. What really catches one's eye on the left bank is the building of the Institute of Radio Physics of the Armenian Academy of Sciences.

Of course, in the old days it was much more crowded here, but the very fact that life has not stopped completely inspires some hope. The house-museum of writer Perch Proshyan is the pride of Ashtarak. Solid, built in a traditional style, it stands on a very cozy street, which starts in the gorge and meanders all the way to the city center. A beautiful fountain honoring World War II heroes and several old mansions add to the look of this picturesque corner of the city.

The old men playing backgammon here have many interesting stories about the city and its inhabitants. We join them in the rotunda and start a conversation.

"There's a two-story house made of red tuff, right there," points one of them. "That is a landmark in Ashtarak. Albert who probably made the best homemade wine and vodka in all of Armenia lived there. The buyers would come from Yerevan and even as far as Leninakan. He did not sell by the glass, but minimum by a liter, and if you arrived even slightly tipsy, he wouldn't sell you a single drop!" ▸

Proper Nouns

It was time to visit the three oldest churches of Ashtarak: Tsiranavor, Karmravor and Surb Marine, which are the most noteworthy historical monuments in the area. Tsiranavor dates back to the 5th century. It is supported by stone props on three sides that protect it from a complete collapse. Despite its derelict condition, the structure miraculously clings to the rocky bank of the Kasakh River. The basilica, divided by internal columns into three naves, is surrounded by two rings of the outside walls, which means that it was used as a fortress, too.

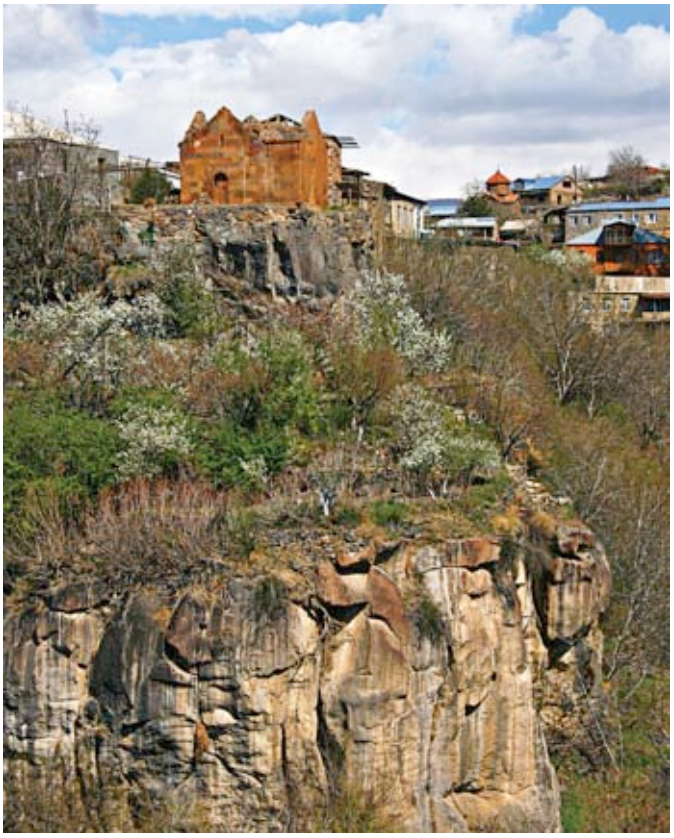
Surb Marine was erected in 1281. Its main structure has an adjacent semi-abandoned auxiliary building, which served as a hospital during the war. There is a well-preserved sundial near the south facade. Just below it, a little girl with eyes as black as night is digging in the earth.

"What is your name, little girl?"

"Marine. I live nearby."

"Were you named after the church?

"No," she says proudly, and removes a strand of hair from her forehead with her tiny dirty hand, "This is my own name. They never name girls after houses, but the house over there was named after me – so my grandfather says." ▸







Tsiranavor dates back to the 5th century. It is supported by stone props on three sides that protect it from a complete collapse. Despite its derelict condition, the structure miraculously clings to the rocky bank of the Kasakh River.

Surroundings

The surroundings of Ashtarak are no less interesting than the city itself. From whatever direction you enter, you find something worthy of attention. By and large, the whole province of Aragatsotn (the foothills of Aragats) with Ashtarak as its administrative center reminds you of a large antique shop. Every step reveals wonders that amaze even professionals in art and archeology. Even when you are just taking a walk through any village or town near Ashtarak, enjoying the peace and serenity of the streets, courtyards and lush gardens of the province, your eye would inevitably catch a look of something to celebrate – almost at every step – whether it is a church, monument, fountain, or simply an age-old tree rising above the road and watching the pace of history.



In Oshakan, near the village of Ashtarak, there is the grave of the creator of the Armenian alphabet Mesrop Mashtots, popularly called the Tomb of the Interpreter. It is located in the Church of St. Mesrop Mashtots, which has been essentially transformed into a memorial museum after the recent restoration. The two-story bell tower, built in 1211-1233 by the architect Momik, was seriously damaged during the 1321 earthquake and 12 years later restored.



There are two towering hills not far from Ashtarak. One of them, called Diti-Cond (Observation Hill), is the location of the remains of ancient dwellings and a huge, stone-block fortress. On the top of another hill, the archaeologists found a large burial ground. By and large, on the banks of Kasakh up to the very border of Ashtarak, one can discover numerous dolmens and cromlechs – the megalithic monuments of the Neolithic and Bronze Age.



Along the highway to Aparan, on a steep bank about a mile from each other, there are two medieval monasteries – Ovanavank and Saghmosavank. The monastery complex of Ovanavank includes a basilica (5th century) and the Temple Surb Karapet (13th century). The latter, with its rich ornamental carvings and stunning khachkars (8th century), was built by Ashtarak Prince Vache Vachutyan. The Prince was also famous for founding Saghmosavank Monastery, one of the most important spiritual centers of Armenia, famous for its large library.



On the road from Ashtarak to the resort Arzni, you first see Yeghvard's basilica (6th century) and then, at the foot of Mount Arailer, the Zoravor temple built by Grigor Mamikonyan, who owned land here in the 7th century. The temple was built under the influence of multi-tiered Zvartnots and newly completed near Echmiadzin. Zoravor was, of course, inferior to it in scale, but the builders were able to grasp and accurately reproduce the architectural idea. Shaped like a star, its dome is supported by eight columns and connected by arches.



Red

But perhaps the most interesting is the Karmravor Church, which translates as red from Armenian. This red tuff temple was built in the 7th century. This is the only religious monument in Armenia with a well-preserved tiled roof, which remained intact because it was firmly nailed into the mortar. There are engraved inscriptions along the outside walls that tell about the residents of Ashtarak who supported the project financially and helped in construction of this church. It also tells about the difficulties the builders faced laying the irrigation canal right under the church walls, which provides water to the gardens of local Kasakh residents. There is a tradition for Armenian churches to remain in semidarkness inside, and your eyes have to adjust first to see the semi columns and arches supporting the dome. Despite the complete lack of lavish decoration (or may be because of it) the church leaves a profound impression.

There are engraved inscriptions along the outside walls that tell about the residents of Ashtarak who supported the project and helped in construction of this church. It also tells about the difficulties the builders faced laying the irrigation canal right under the church walls.

A modern café nearby has a summer terrace and a large interior hall. Built with great attention to detail, its modern look is strangely in contrast to the ancient Karmravor Church. But this proximity of the old and new is not necessarily bad, considering the fact that you can grab something to eat before the journey. However, the café is closed as it is out of season — spring is coming late this year.

Three boys are dangling their legs perched on the wall of Karmravor. As it usually happens, our equipment interests them. They inquire in detail about our cameras, but when in return we ask them to tell us something about the church, they shy away for some reason. It is two o'clock in the afternoon, and one of the boys drops an explanation. "It is time for us... to go to school... I guess. "

Post Scriptum

Along the Ashtarak highway to Yerevan they sell locally grown apples. We yielded to the temptation and decided to buy a couple of pounds from an old man. The grandpa pointed to his remaining merchandise. "Guys, there are about two kilos left. Why should I sit here because of them? Take them too." While we were looking at each other, he, with a sigh, emptied whatever was left in the box into a plastic bag and handed it to us. Free! ■



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Governor for the People



At 10 A.M. on the dot, a black classic Lincoln pulls up to the office – out steps former Governor George Deukmejian in a well-pressed suit. We formally shake hands and continue on our way to the elevators while we briefly chat off the record. An exchange of friendly background information takes place over fresh baklava and coffee right before our scheduled interview. An entire two hours later, a comforting realization hits me. As one of the most reputable politicians of our time, who was once considered as a vice presidential running mate by George Bush Sr., Governor Deukmejian possesses a humble and kind-hearted nature that is very human. During this interview, I was introduced to a side of our former governor that I could not search on Google. Much like how John F. Kennedy charmed the nation with his charisma and good looks, George Deukmejian evoked my interest far beyond his 28 years in politics.

Text **Sauline Kojababian** | Photos **from the archives of George Deukmejian**



The Forewarning that Led

The disturbing news was spreading – the oppression had begun and rules were changing under the Ottoman Empire. In 1907, a young Alice Gairdanian from Erzurum, Turkey, made her way to the United States accompanied by her mother and sister. With the help of family friends, they settled in the city of Troy, New York. Successfully escaping persecution in Turkey, Alice went on to marry Courken George Deukmejian Sr., who had also escaped from Turkey when he was 21 years old. "My father fled as well, knowing the policies of the Ottoman Empire were very hostile toward Armenians at that time," Deukmejian explains. George Deukmejian Jr. was born in the village of Menands, New York, on June 6th, 1928, in the midst of the Great Depression. Making ends meet was a challenge for the Deukmejian family. His father, a jack of all trades, was originally a photographer but later went into the rug business. At that time, not very many people had the money to buy oriental rugs, and the business suffered. His mother Alice joined the workforce when George was six years old.



↓
A young Deukmejian sitting on his father George's lap in a family portrait with his sister Anna, and mother Alice.

"Many of the Armenian women in our area went to work in factories. My mother made neckties; a very difficult type of work. My father went on to work for a company that sold paper products and stayed for the rest of his working life," he says. The governor's only sibling Anna was a remarkably talented pianist. Although she did not pursue a career in music, the piano forever remained her first love. As a young child, Anna would frequently play at local churches. "My mother had a very good voice. Several Armenian organizations would invite her to sing, and my sister would accompany her on the piano. Naturally, they would drag me along as a young kid. I had to sit there and listen to all the speeches and songs — they were very boring," he laughs. On a train trip to Los Angeles, Anna fell in love with a Californian, Nubar Ashjian. They married, and Anna moved to the West Coast in 1950. George Deukmejian, in the meantime, was attending college in New York. He earned his law degree from St. John's University in 1952 and was looking forward to a new chapter in his life.

A Lucky Encounter with Paris

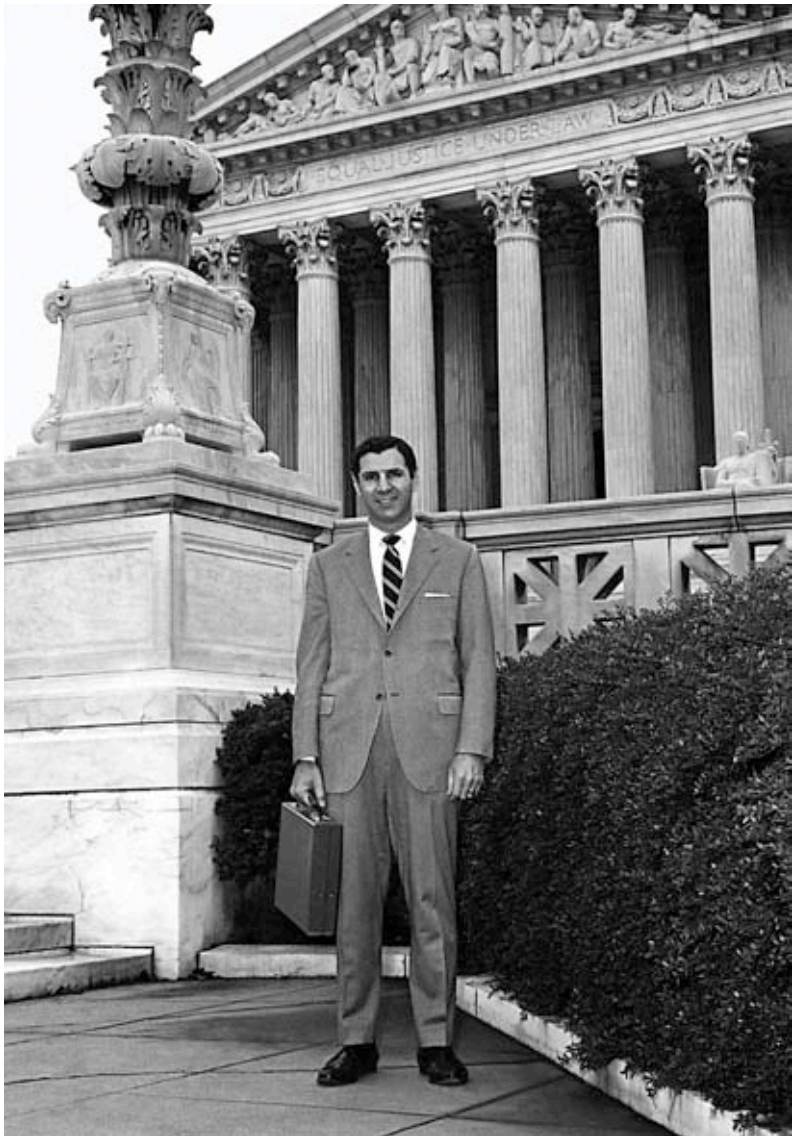
When I asked the governor to talk about his experience in the army, he responded "Ha, now that's another story!" Immediately my curiosity was aroused. Rightfully so, as the story behind the statement was clarified shortly. As soon as he graduated law school, and without getting a second to breathe, he was drafted into the U.S. Army in the rank of private first class. His first stop was post World War II Germany. At the time, the Korean War, the first major military conflict between the Western powers and Communist nations which lasted three years, was being fought. "In 1953, I could have easily been sent to Korea but instead I went to Europe. Boy, did I consider myself fortunate," he says with a big grin.

While being relocated from Hamburg to Frankfurt in the midst of the Cold War, the second streak of luck came his way. As his papers were being processed, an officer in Frankfurt noted Deukmejian's legal background, took him aside and asked him if he could somehow get a military leave pass to Bonn, Germany (headquarters of the U.S. Army) to see a general within the Judge Advocate Corps. "So... I told a little white lie and asked my commanding officer if I could go to Bonn and visit a relative. I was granted a three-day pass which enabled me to meet with the general. As he shuffled through my papers, he asked me, 'Do you want to go to Munich or Paris?' I told him 'well...I took

French in school, maybe I would be of more use in Paris,'" chuckles the Governor as he recalls the story. As soon as the orders were cut, Deukmejian was on the next train to the city of romance, where traditional protocol took an unconventional turn. He signed on to the Army Claims Team, the sector responsible for processing assault claims made by French nationals against U.S. army personnel.

After the war in 1954, France made every effort to rebuild the nation and its tourism industry. The French were very apprehensive about having uniformed soldiers guarding their beloved capital, fearing it would frighten potential tourists. "I was given an allowance to rent a chic apartment in town. I was also restricted from wearing a uniform, so instead I wore my regular clothes. I would get up in the morning and walk to work. Our office was located in the heart of the Champs Elysees, one block from the Arc de Triumph. It really felt like a civilian job – I could not believe this was my assignment. I was very blessed."

On his return to the United States, a piece of sisterly advice from Anna Ashjian forever changed the course of his life. "After my time in the army was over, my sister and her husband encouraged me to come to California because of the number of opportunities. So I drove from Albany, New York to Los Angeles and settled there in 1955. She was right: there was more opportunity for me in California."



↑
George Deukmejian as a young lawyer.

From a Part-Time Lawyer...

New to the Golden State and eager to practice law, studying for the California Bar Exam became Deukmejian's top priority. "When I passed the bar exam, I started my professional law career at the County Council Office. We handled all the civil legal matters for the county," says Deukmejian. Around the same time, at an Armenian wedding in 1956, Gloria Saatjian, whose parents were also Genocide survivors, caught the eye of young and handsome George Deukmejian. "The wedding was in Pasadena; we met and started dating soon after. She lived in Long Beach, where she had grown up. We went on four dates, I think, and I asked her to marry me. Since then, it has been 53 years," he explains proudly.

As a newlywed, Governor Deukmejian settled in Long Beach, California and started his private practice. At that time, law offices were mainly in downtown, and no one had tapped into the Belmont Shore area, which lies on the eastern side of Long Beach. "I went to the weekly newspaper and said 'Are there any law offices around here?' They said no. So I decided to rent an office space on the second floor of an independent bank building."

A stranger to the city, Deukmejian took whatever business came in the front door. Starting off as a simple Republican Party volunteer, his connection with the city grew stronger as he became well-acquainted with the local state assemblyman and joined his reelection efforts

"If it weren't for the Armenian community, I honestly believe I would not have been elected governor. Although they were small in numbers, their impact was immenses," says George Deukmejian

as the campaign manager. In 1962, George Deukmejian ran for state assembly and won. Interestingly enough, at that time, legislature positions were only part-time, so Deukmejian continued to practice law adding three new partners. In 1966, the people of the state successfully voted to change the legislature from part-time to full-time. "My salary was $6,000 a year. After the ruling, it went up to $16, 000," laughs Deukmejian. Soon George Deukmejian was elected as a state senator, representing the district from the east side of Long Beach to the outskirts of Whittier, California.

"Around 1970, I made an effort to become the Attorney General of California and lost. I lost badly. I did not even make it through the first Republican primary," says Deukmejian. All of that changed eight years later when he won, becoming the only Armenian Attorney General in California. With more relationships, experience and political connections, the win came easily. As Attorney General, he strengthened the Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, established a Special Prosecutions Unit and a Crime Prevention Center. He was strict on prosecuting consumer fraud and Medi-Cal fraud among other white collar crimes.

...to a Full-time Governor

In 1983, George Deukmejian was inaugurated as the 35th governor of California and then reelected for a second term, defeating former L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley by one of the largest vote margins in California state history. When he started his first gubernatorial term, the state was nearly bankrupt with a $1.5 billion budget deficit. If that wasn't enough pressure, unemployment was nearly 11 percent. During his time as governor, George Deukmejian worked with the legislature to balance the budget by developing a fiscal rescue plan without having to raise taxes. The Governor also increased support for AIDS, transportation, toxic clean-up and tourism. Deukmejian's highest funding priority was education. He believed in building a better populace through education. Funding for kindergarten through 12th grade was increased by nearly 115 percent. Public safety was yet another top priority for Governor Deukmejian. Approximately 15 new state correctional facilities were built as part of a major prison construction program. He created more than 3 million new jobs and led California as the new business state. In 1986, he established a state holiday in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In sixteen years of being in state government, Deukmejian authored more than 180 laws and used his veto power as governor over 4,000 times. Surprisingly none of his vetoes were ever overturned.

Member of the California State Assembly
(1962-1967)
Majority Leader in the California State Senate
(1967-1979)
Elected 27th Attorney General
(1979-1983)
Elected 35th Governor of California
(1983-1991)

Info
From 1979 to 1988, crime in California dropped eleven percent, while the nation as a whole saw an increase.

An Armenian for Armenians

In those days, Armenians were not involved with Armenians, but with the help of his sister and brother-in-law Archie Dikranian, Deukmejian built close relationships and gained a lot of support in the Armenian community. "As the Armenian people began to find out about an Armenian state senator, I started being invited to many events and gained a flurry of followers. Many even changed from being a Democrat to a Republican," he explains. In many aspects, he felt like a pioneer, which encouraged him to keep working toward his goals. After he won the election for governor, he knew it was time to give back to the community that had supported him. When the devastating earthquake hit Armenia in 1988, the governor participated in a fundraising telethon that raised over $3 million dollars for the victims. He also donated over $100,000 from his own campaign funds to aid Armenia. Deukmejian has nominated and appointed many Armenian-Americans into office, notably the former Los Angeles County District Attorney Robert Philibosian and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Marvin Baxter among others.

During his time in office, Deukmejian's highest funding priority was education. He believed in building a better future for people by educating them. He was also known to be very strict on crime which came from a place really close to his heart. "I always had Armenians in the back of my mind. That the sufferings of the Armenian people, including my parents, endured because of criminal injustice during the Genocide never left me. I wanted to do the right thing and build better public safety," he says. In 1982, the estimated number of prison inmates was 35,000. In 1991, that number reached 97,000.

During his time in office, Deukmejian's highest funding priority was education. He believed in building a better future for people by educating them. He was also known to be very strict on crime.



For the Love of a City

The city of Long Beach has been pivotal to the success of George Deukmejian's career and personal life. California State University, Long Beach has honored him with an honorary degree for his loyal citizenship and named a street "Deukmejian Drive" for his efforts. With countless accomplishments, Governor Deukmejian continues to be an active leader in the community to this day. In 2010, the governor transferred all his political archives to California State University, Long Beach. In 2013, Long Beach will be home to the prestigious "Governor George Deukmejian Courthouse," currently under construction. "We had a groundbreaking ceremony for a new courthouse, and I feel so grateful that the city decided to name it after me. I remember a time when Long Beach did not have its own courthouse. I hope I am still around for its grand opening because Long Beach is not only where I shared a life with my family and where my kids went to school, but it is also where I started my career in politics. It has made me who I am. The city has been very good to me," he says.

↑ George Deukmejian with former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev

Overlooking the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains near Glendale, California the Deukmejian Wilderness Park was renamed in 1988 in honor of Deukmejian and his Armenian heritage. Gloria Deukmejian serves on the board of the St. Mary Medical Care Foundation as well as performing other volunteer work for the State of California. After his official retirement in 2000 from Sidley & Austin Law Firm, Governor Deukmejian left his political legacy behind. The man who brought back the death penalty lives a serene and low key lifestyle with his three children and six grandchildren. In his second inaugural address Deukmejian said, "I pledge to you a government that brings out the best in people, so that people can bring out the best in California." Although many years have passed since then, former Governor George Deukmejian continues to serve the public and uphold his promise. ■

Swan Lake — կարապի Լիճ [kar-a-pi lich]



Swan Lake

When the founding architect of Yerevan, Alexander Tamanian, drew the blueprint of our capital, his most precious and innovative project was the circular classical building of the Theater of Opera and Ballet, with a large square in front and a green belt park around it. Across the park several steps away, an artificial lake embraces the audience exiting the concert halls. Black and white swans swim in it, and a little island surrounded by weeping willows is connected by a tiny bridge. Ask native Yerevan residents, and they will proudly show you their old childhood photographs by Swan Lake. For children of Yerevan, the place always was a continuation of Tchaikovsky's fairy tale, and even the sculpture of a beautiful harpist under the old willow tree proves the connection to the magical tale. Surely that was the idea of the original Lake's creators – to give children and their parents a small dream-like spot to relax and unwind. Yerevan residents use Swan Lake with great inventiveness – leisure walks, romantic evenings, summer concerts and screenings, even wind-surfing competitions, not to mention a skating rink in the winter. This favorite spot is busy in all seasons of the year.

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