September-October, 2011 issue (15)

# yerevan

A MAGAZINE WITH AN ACCENT



THE UNFILTERED INTERVIEW WITH **CHARLES AZNAVOUR**

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THE KNOCKOUT PUNCH WITH **VIC DARCHINYAN**

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS OF **CALLIE THORNE**

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## Bridges

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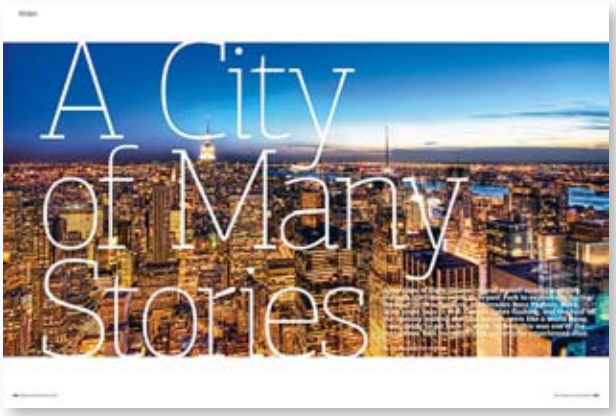


There are many names that one identifies with New York. From the Empire State to the Big Apple, it is place of many wonders and many adventures.

## Patrons

# page 38

### Sense of Time

Only 25 years old, Rima Kazumyan has the great blend of youth and success, already holding the Assistant Chief Designer's post at Emporio Armani for their men's clothing line.



## Career

# page 48



### Scent for the Ages

Walk through a department store and you'll see works of art from Francis Kurkdjian. From Chanel to Dior and now to his own fragrance house, Kurkdjian has made a name in the world of scent.

## Bridal Fashion

# page 34

### New York Runway Show

From elegant beading to endless yards of silk, the latest bridal trends have hit the runway. From the creations of St Pucci to Lazaro, this season is all about the bride.



## Person

# page 42



### She is ELLE

Join us on our trip to Paris, where Valérie Toranian, the French-Armenian Editor-in-Chief of the world's largest fashion magazine, ELLE, shares her story and ideas on modern day feminism.


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## Style
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### Sculpting Hair to New Lights
Celebrity hairstylist Naz Kupelian wanted to become a doctor before embarking on a successful career in the hair industry.

## Fashion
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### Here Comes the Bride
The quirky Armine Ohanessian stands out from the crowd of generic designers with her couture line R-Mine.

## Names
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He was a genius who "was called upon by God to dress the angels" and his sense of beauty and style proved to be everlasting. Christian Dior was one of the most influential figures in the world of fashion.

## Archive
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### Fashions of the East and West
Ruth Thomasian, the founder of Project SAVE, dug through the library of pictures to compare the wear of Armenians.

## Exclusive
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### An International Legend
The legendary Charles Aznavour sits down one-on-one with *Yerevan Magazine* for an unfiltered interview. It has a special message for you.

## Event
page 76



### "Yerevan My Love" in London
The "Yerevan My Love" project aims on improving the lives of disabled children while preserving architecturally significant buildings in Yerevan.

## Gallery
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### Seven Years in Paradise
Discover the long lost art of Arman Tateos Manookian, an artist of the Hawaiian Paradise heralded as the tropic's Van Gogh.

## Art
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### Two Brothers, One Dream
The Dilakian brothers exhibit their boxed treasures, featuring vignettes from some notable artists' lives.



## Literature
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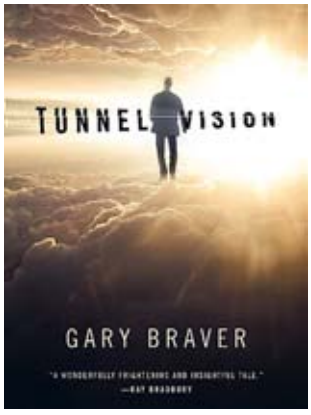


### A Grey Matter of Life and Death
Gary Braver's latest thriller provides a chilling glimpse of the other side.

## Science
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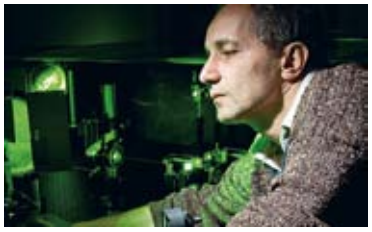
### The World in 3D
Two physicists have developed holographic imaging techniques that landed them acclaim.

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## Sports
page 94




Vic Darchinyan is an untamable bull in the boxing ring. He has been one of Armenia's most celebrated athletes in the last 10 years. At 35 years old, the four time world champion is still at the top of his game, with no plans of slowing anytime soon.

## Ambiance
page 112

### Characteristics of the Traditional Armenian Wedding
From the vast number of wedding traditions performed in Armenia, we have chosen the most important, amazing and interesting ones.



## Journey
page 126



### Survival Test
Amberd is the mesmerizing seventh century Armenian "fortress of the clouds," located on the slopes of Mount Aragats.

## Cinema


page 100

### A Recipe for Television Fame
Beauty, brains and talent are a potent combination for Callie Thorne and her new show *Necessary Roughness*.

## Excursion
page 120



### Return of Njdeh
In 1955, two inmates buried an old convict. Today, we can finally reveal the details of Operation Njdeh, as unburied by Pavel Ananian.

## Actual City
page 134

### Yerevan in Mother Tongue
*Yerevan Magazine* is now available in an Armenian edition. Thousands of free copies were distributed during the open air concert by Dorians in Yerevan.



## Debut
page 104

### The Art of Daydreaming
Photographer Aram Bedrossian ditched his biology background for the glitz and glamour of NYC, fashion and photograpgy.



## Food
page 124



### Dolma "Biayna"
Though we fully unerstand your grandmother's dolma is top notch, try our variaiton of the dish as well.

## Retro
page 136




Armenian athletes were the first representatives of the Ottoman Empire at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm. However, many of them shared the fate of their nation soon thereafter.

## Music


page 108

### The Perfect Stranger
Bob Nalbandian has been one of the behind-the-scene acts propelling revered and loved rock acts for countless years.

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**Special Thanks to:**

Ruth Thomasian for her assistance in preparation of the material "Fashions of the East and West"

Rita Goldman for her assistance in preparation of the material "Seven Years in Paradise"

Anna Movsisyan from UNESCO for her assistance in preparation of the material "She is ELLE"

Hratch Tchilingirian for his assistance in preparation of the material "Yerevan My Love in London"

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**Images from:** Corbis, PanARMENIAN Photo, Showtime Sports, USA Network, Bob Bangerter, St. Pucci, Ines Di Santo, Pearson Scott Foresman.

**Images from the archives of:** Ornamented Initials, Anahit Publishing House, 1992, From the Paris Auction Catalogue, 2000, Haik Demoyan's book "Armenian Sports and Physical Training in the Ottoman Empire", Project SAVE Archives, Rima Kazumyan, Duke Photography Inc., Hovik and Gagik Dilakian, Aram Bedrossian, Gary Goshgarian, Douglas Frazer Fine Art, Mitchell Brown Fine Art.

**Illustrations:** GEGHAM VARDANYAN, VAHRAM MURADYAN.

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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 July 21, 2011.

Printed in the USA:
Printograph Inc. 7625 N. San Fernando Road, Burbank, California 91505

Price $6.99

Readership 50,000

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

Please submit all subscription inquiries, editorial, business, and production correspondence to *Yerevan Magazine*, 135 S. Jackson Street, Suite 202, Glendale, CA 91205. Those submitting manuscripts, photographs, artwork, or other materials to *Yerevan Magazine* for consideration should not send originals unless specifically requested to do so by *Yerevan Magazine* in writing. Unsolicited manuscripts, photographs and other submitted materials must be accompanied by a self-addressed overnight-delivery return envelope, postage prepaid. However, *Yerevan Magazine* is not responsible for loss, damage, or any other injury to unsolicited manuscripts, unsolicited artwork or any other unsolicited material.

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Nonna Isajanyan

Fashion is a relative phenomenon. Many visitors to Yerevan could not help but notice the exquisitely well dressed men and women on the streets. Women in Yerevan put on their nicest outfits and full make-up before leaving the house, even to go to the grocers nearby. However, on many occasions, those same women wear those same outfits for a late dinner or a party.

In the U.S., on the other hand, people often dress too casually for their daily activities. Here is the land of flip flops for brunch, jeans for business casual, and Keds for movies. Nevertheless, in the U.S. people spare no expense on their evening gowns, tuxedos and wedding dresses. This often reaches another extreme, when the same dress or tuxedo is not worn twice, especially if the owner was photographed in it. This idea of spending tens of thousands of dollars on an evening outfit and never wearing it again may seem ridiculous not only in Armenia, but also in many other parts of the world.

Thus, fashion always reflects society – its insecurities, vanities, conformities or revolts. Often it is a vehicle for an endless popularity contest with many losers and few winners.

The stories of fashion icons (Chanel and Dior), victims (Marie Antoinette), trendsetters (St. Lorain), and rule-breakers (Lady Gaga and Alexander McQueen) continue to fascinate generations to come.

What is fashion if not a mere concept that gets lost in translation. It is the belief and understated daily task that has many thriving while others struggling trying to get the look. It is fashion that has started many revolutions such as the abandonment of the corset, the adoption of pantaloons, and idea of being simply fabulous. Many find fashion intimidating while others live for the latest conception that will transfigure ones lifestyle. It gives voice to the unheard, a place for the fearless, and way to control and sustain a rhythm. Fashion is not always about what is in style but also what one can and cannot wear. It is a field that has no borders, limits or end in sight.

It is this belief and ideology that is embodied in fashion that ignites the curiosity of the *Yerevan* team. Whatever this notion is – art or intent, style or trend, our world would be a boring place without it. Thus, we join the legion of media saluting the ever-changing world of fashion. Viva la mode!

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*Dear Editor,*
*I am a proud Armenian living in New York and would really like to take the time to tell you that I enjoy reading your publication. In the recent July/August issue, I particularly took pleasure in reading "The Dream Girl." I found it very interesting that a former playboy model is breaking stereotypes. Her story is inspiring and out of the norm. I also liked the biblical references. I would suggest featuring more non-Armenian individuals in Yerevan Magazine. I feel it brings a different element to the table, which can be beneficial to not only expand the readership but inform us about how others tie in with our culture. I hope to see more of these types of articles. Also, I think it was an awesome idea to come out with a Japanese issue. The Top List facts were fun to read! Especially the fact about Japan not having names for months – who knew?*

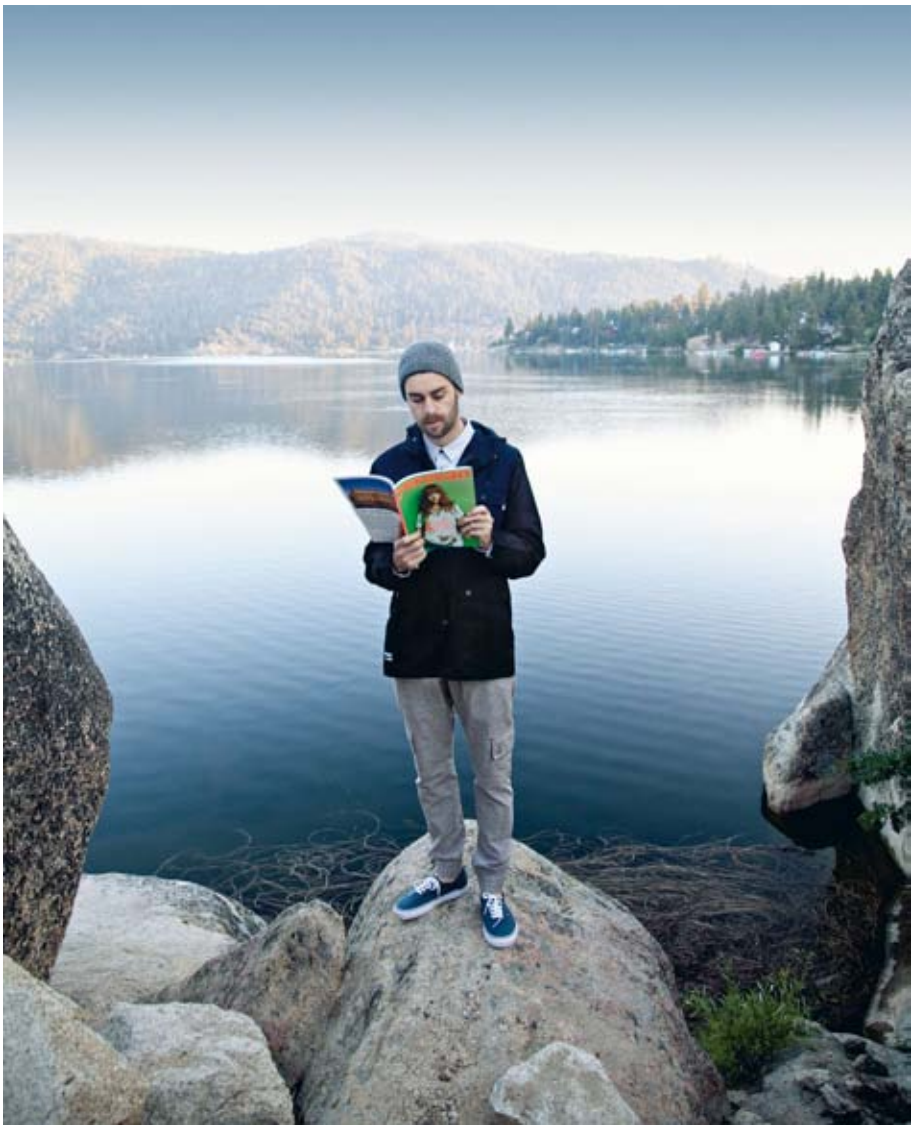
**Michele Bekian**
**New York, New York**

*I enjoyed the comparison of Armenian and Japanese cultures in your recent issue. I was also amused by the fact in your Top List, that the last three Prime Ministers of Japan resigned after they failed to successfully complete their pre-election pledge. I wish you would compare this Code of Honor with politicians in the U.S. and Armenia.*

**Anahid Kaloustian**
**Glendale, CA**

*The story on the life of Diana Apcar was so beautifully written. What an amazing woman and an inspiration, especially to young Armenian women such as myself. Thank you for doing the legacy of this woman justice and please continue to highlight more of the countless Armenian women who defy the odds and find ways to inspire and lead our community. Armenian women should be looking to them as role models, and they deserve the recognition.*

**Alina Eskanderian**
**San Francisco, California**



Tigran Tovmasyan

*In your May/June issue – the Calendar section devoted to the Feast of Ascension, the word "dzvadzegh" merits a couple of explanations. First, the second "d" is unnecessary, since that compound noun consists of "dzoo" (egg) and "zegh" (stem of the verb "zeghool," which means to make full beyond measure). "Dzvadzegh" is omelette, which is not cooked by frying whole but by mixing and pouring the contents of an uncooked egg into a pan placed on top of a heated flame. In a sermon of Jesus quoted by the Evangelist Luke, the adjective "zeghoon" is mentioned: "Dook…chop borvok…zeghoon datzen ee gogs tzer" (Give…good measure… running over, will put into your lap. Luke 6:38.)*

**Arten Ashjian**
**Yonkers, New York**

*I have been receiving Yerevan Magazine ever since it came out. I like its wide range of historical and contemporary articles, as well as it's beautiful and illuminating photos; this is a magazine that is knowledgeable and inspiring. As the pile of magazines on my desk grew each year, I got used to its constant presence in my life. Each time I hold a new issue in my hands and get carried away with an article that is interesting and exciting, and I get an immense feeling of pride for our nation, our language, and a desire to preserve and protect Armenian culture that is so unique and distinguished. Yerevan Magazine is food for the heart and the soul. Thank you to everyone who makes this magazine possible. I am a fan for life.*

**Zara Poghosyan**
**Los Angeles, California**



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### Gegham Vardanyan
**art director**

Marine battles were Gegham's favorite subject to draw as a child. And in spite of various other interests and hobbies, he confidently chose visual arts when the time came to choose his future profession.
After graduating from the Department of Drawing at the Armenian Institute of Pedagogy and serving in the army, he started working with the team of renowned cartoonist Robert Sahakyants. Gegham then decided to venture down the path of becoming a graphic designer. He held various positions in several companies and always enjoyed success.
Gegham worked in one of the largest publishing houses in Moscow, Russia for seven years before coming to the realization that it was time to go back home. He is the current art director of the English version of *Yerevan Magazine* and continues to serve Yerevan Productions both as an illustrator and designer.

### Gayane Khechoomian
**editor**

Gayane has been with *Yerevan* for the last three years, having dabbled in all aspects of the magazine before working as the copy editor. She was born and raised in Stockholm, Sweden where she lived for 13 years before moving to the United States. Gayane holds a bachelors degree in history from UCLA and is currently in her second year of law school at Loyola. She remains active in the Armenian community as a Homenetmen scout, and is also the co-founder of *The Armenian Chronicles* paper at UCLA. In her spare time – which is hard to come by these days – she enjoys traveling back home to Sweden and throughout Europe.

### Mari Gezalyan
**editor**

Mari is the fashion guru at *Yerevan Magazine*. Her background in the trade is deep-rooted, as she helped her mother in all of her creations and collections when she was just a toddler. Mari is a UCLA graduate, where she double-majored in history and art history. She is currently pursuing her masters in fashion studies at Parsons in New York City. Whether covering fashion week, exploring the next trend or styling photo shoots, she has brought her unique insight on the industry through all of her stories since joining the staff two years ago, where she also met her future husband, Hayk Tovmasyan.

### Lilit Barsegyan
**journalist**

With skydiving and bungee jumping crossed off her list, Lilit is currently awaiting her next adventure. Born in Yerevan and raised in Los Angeles, she is always looking for a new challenge. Although she enjoys living in such a diverse city where she's constantly able to find new interests and hobbies, she loves to travel and has had the opportunity to tour all over Europe. Although she holds a bachelors degree in fashion design and marketing, she has always had a passion for writing. Lilit joined the *Yerevan* team a year ago and aspires to continue writing. Her goal in life is to always seek motivation and inspire others.








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## September 21
### Independence Day

This year Armenia will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its independence. In 1991 Armenia held a referendum on independence in which 95% of all the citizens voted for it. A couple of days later, the Armenian Parliament declared Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union. Since then, September 21 has been celebrated every year as an official holiday.



## September 13
### The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross/ The Feast of the Holy Cross

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was established in honor of the return of the Holy Cross. This is the most important of the four feasts of the Holy Cross observed by the Armenian Apostolic Church on a Sunday between September 11 and 17. On this day, a liturgical service is conducted in the churches in memory of the deceased.

In the year 610 A.D., the armies of the Persian ruler Khosrov II attacked the Byzantine Empire. In 614 A.D. they captured Jerusalem and the sacred life-giving cross of Christ appeared among the spoils of war. When the Byzantine emperor Heraclius defeated the Persian army and liberated Jerusalem with his army (which also consisted of Armenian troops headed by the Sparapet Mahesh Gnuni), the first condition of the peace treaty was to return the Holy Cross. The Cross was solemnly transferred to Constantinople and then returned to Jerusalem. A religious feast was established in honor of this event. According to legend, the emperor Heraclius bore the Cross on his own shoulders to elevate it onto Golgotha. Hence, the name of the feast – *Khachverats* (to exalt the Cross). The *Khachverats* also marked the arrival of fall and a number of sayings which reflect the meaning of the feast are preserved to this day: "The Holy Cross has come – take your blanket and get into the house," meaning those who used to sleep in the open air during the hot summer days should return to their houses.

# October

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Suren Manvelyan

## October 8
### Holy Translators' Day

Holy Translators' Day is one of the beloved Armenian national and religious holidays. It is dedicated to Mesrop Mashtots, Yeghishe, Movses Kertogh, philosopher David Anhaght, Grigor Narekatsi and Nerses Klayentsi. This holiday is always observed on the Saturday between October 7 and November 7. Translators, philologists, linguists, Armenian writers and books have been honored on this day for thousands of years through a liturgical service held at St. Mesrop Mashtots Church in Oshakan where the relics of Mesrop Mashtots lie. Every year since 2006, the sacred Gospel of Shukhonts (1669) is brought from the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, the Matenadaran, for the liturgical feast. While the Gospel of Shukhonts is displayed the pilgrims are given a chance throughout the day to venerate the Gospel and receive a blessing.

The Armenian Apostolic Church has canonized many translators, thus immortalizing their names. If it wasn't for them, Armenians would not have the Bible – of which Koryun's words "God spoke Armenian" are uttered. More than 100 disciples of Mesrop Mashtots and Sahak Partev were making translations in the 5th century A.D. (the Golden Age of Armenian literature). Among them: Yeznik Koghbatsi, Koryun, Ghevond, John of Egheghiatz, Joseph of Baghin and Movses Khorenatsi. The names of many translators are on the pages of the Recollections (*Hishatakarans*).

The manuscript of the year 1285 contains the following inscription: "translator David Taronatsi has transposed this speech from Greek into Armenian in the city of Damascus at curopalates Hamazasp and Mamikonyan's request."

The manuscripts were translated, copied and preserved in Scriptoriums – the centers for Biblical antiquities. The largest scriptoriums were located in Syunik, Tatev, Haghpat and Sanahin, as well as in the provinces of Vaspurakan, Taron, Kamsarakan, Shirak and Ararat. Scribes, bookbinders, masters of parchment making and artisans who made and manufactured boards, curly locks and other metallic binding parts – all worked at the libraries. The process of bookmaking was time consuming and required huge amounts of work, materials and funds. It is no wonder books were so expensive. For instance, it is known that a woman named Margarita gave "two oxen, two horses and a cow" in exchange for the Gospel of Artik, which today is kept in the Matenadaran, and in 1315, a person named Sarkis bought the Gospel from the Archimandrite Poghos for 50 gold coins.

Books were like living beings to the Armenians, and in the Middle Ages people would write "The book was held prisoner," or the book was returned from captivity." In accordance with the ancient unwritten law, the owners of the "imprisoned" books had to find them and bring them back home. People would look for the books and would bring them back even if they had to spend their entire lives on that mission, as everything inscribed in the books carried an "indelible memory," symbolizing the link between generations and serving as the reason for the nation's existence.

# Taboos before and after Marriage



Vahram Muradyan

Marriage is defined as "the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as husband and wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law." In the U.S.A., a country with the largest number of family law attorneys, this contractual relationship supports an entire industry. But do we really need laws when it comes to true love and the promise of being together "till death do us part?" Although the rules and social norms of marriage have been written and rewritten by many throughout the centuries, there were no rules established for pre-marital behavior. We randomly asked readers of *Yerevan Magazine* about some of the taboos that exist between two people before they legalize their bond.

## He says

**Roma Budaghyan**
**Paralegal**
For me there are no taboos when it comes to love, except one thing: I don't want the girl I am planning to marry to be in touch with her ex-boyfriend. I don't care if it is a casual lunch or even having coffee together at Starbucks. She has to move on and carrying the past into the new relationship is definitely a taboo to me.

**Eric Kowalski**
**Fitness Coach**
What I see at least here in Los Angeles is that a lot of people have a negative view of marriage; they think that suddenly it gets boring and you get into a routine when married. To them, after marriage there is no excitement, the romance dies and that person is holding you back. That negativity is a taboo. In my opinion, marriage is a partnership. My parents were more of a team, where there is a loyalty thing and you don't run when things get tough, you work together. Now, at least in Los Angeles, people seem to be there for the fun and excitement, but they aren't really there for the real commitment. That is a taboo for me when it comes to marriage.

**Larry Birkhead**
**Photographer/Actor**
It is a taboo to cheat before marriage. You can't really make it only about yourself when in a marriage. You have to know that it's a partnership and I think you have to let go of some of the things that were in your past when you were independent. You have to let go of it all and you have to realize that you are a part of the team and it's a real partnership. I think some people go into marriage still thinking they are single in their mind. And that is a recipe for a disaster.

**Ara Markarian**
**Programmer**
The biggest taboo would be not calling the parents-in-law Mom and Dad. No, it would be cheating on the spouse before or after the marriage.

**Paul Bakoonts**
**Writer**
Having to live with my in-laws is a taboo for me. That's why before marriage I want to buy this round house so that I sound totally believable when I claim that I have no corner in my house. I wouldn't mind my in laws in my round-house if they can find a corner.

**Dave Guru**
**Marketing & Business Development**
Marrying someone because you got them pregnant is a taboo for me.

**Raymond Martino**
**Writer/ Director "Da Vinci's War," "To the Limit"**
Forcing the issue of marriage is a taboo. Too many people force the issue of marriage and they are not ready for it. We live in a different time than when I was a kid. Nowadays we are so filled up with media and everything else that people don't have the time to get to know each other. It has nothing to do with female-male intimacy. It has to do with the loss of the structure of a family. So taboo for me would be getting married for the wrong reasons. People get married and they don't even know each other. Years back I did the same. I married this beautiful show girl from Las Vegas. She was tall and beautiful, redhead, freckled, Irish-English. We got married because she was quitting her job at the MGM and had to go back to London. I didn't want her to leave.

**Ruben Zachary**
**Businessman**
Taboos in Armenian culture can be studied in my personal experiences. I lived with an Armenian girl for five years without marrying her. I am so glad I did not marry her because we realized that it did not work for us and avoided painful divorce proceding. Then I lived with a Russian girl who had a five-year-old son from her previous marriage. Then I married her, but only after we had a son together. But I am happy!

## She says

**Dr. Lisa Manuelian**
**Psy.D.**
Premarital sex is still a taboo, even though we are in 2011. Pregnancy before marriage is still a taboo. It's unfortunate because when people have sex or have kids without being in a marriage, our culture makes them feel extremely guilty. I think education would be the best way to fight those taboos, and integration into the dominant culture is much needed as well. I am not saying we should lose our culture and our values, but I also believe that it's very difficult not to integrate into the dominant culture and live with our cultural taboos.

**Anna Nazarian**
**Registered Nurse**
Not being a virgin would be the biggest taboo I can think of. It's very common in the Armenian culture for a girl to be a virgin, which I don't agree with. I think virginity can be a beautiful thing, but it's a personal thing. Virginity doesn't change your personality. People should pay more attention to what the person is all about and what qualities they possess.

**Sarine Boyadjian**
**Therapist**
I think living together and having children before marriage are taboos. Living together is a big one because I think the older generation would want to believe that the couple is not having sex. As for me, I absolutely think that people should live together before getting married.

**Vicky Kalents**
**Mother-to-be**
Pretty much everything is a taboo before marriage in this culture. I think my situation is a very big taboo in Armenian culture. I am pregnant, not married and I am single. I feel like everyone looks at me with great pity, which is very unfortunate because I absolutely don't feel that way. In this culture even living alone, separate from your parents, is a taboo. So I fit all these categories!

**Corinne Baruch**
**Affordable Housing Developer**
I definitely wouldn't be sleeping with the man I want to marry and sleep with other men at the same time. Gosh! I don't think you can ever take that back. Before I married my husband, it was taboo for me to reveal too much of myself. But what I learned since I've been with him is that the more I reveal of myself the better the relationship is. Also, it was taboo for me to say anything controversial. For instance, I wouldn't oppose his political views. I would keep it all to myself and be nice. Now it has all changed.

**Christine Leyva**
**Therapist**
Getting pregnant before marriage, and obviously that comes with premarital sex and cohabitating before marriage. As to me, I am very open-minded and I think living with one another is a good thing – you get to know your partner. However, getting pregnant before marriage is a taboo for me.

**Ellenie Galestian**
**Dancer/Singer**
For me, living together is not a taboo. Sometimes you get into a marriage and then you are like: "Oops, I wish I knew the bad habits of this person and what this person is all about." You can't do anything then because it's too late. Not dating someone for a long time and marrying him is a taboo. I saw the true colors of the person I was with after five years of dating. I am glad I did so before marriage. So, even if you are at the altar and you feel something is off, it is better to break it off right there. To me it is a taboo to go after that marriage simply because your family and friends expect you to get married.

**Vard Khudatyan**
**Biologist (working for her husband in his medical office)**
One of the taboos in our culture would be disobeying your man. So, I guess not being obedient to your man is one.



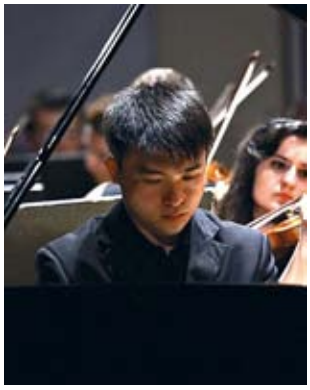

## Andre Agassi Inducted into the Hall of Fame

An accolade that was only a matter of when, and not if, tennis legend Andre Kirk Agassi was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in July. During his reign in tennis, the 40 year-old Las Vegas native held the No. 1 singles ranking for 101 weeks. He was regarded as one of the greatest tennis players of all time, as well as one of the premier athletes of his generation. He achieved a career singles record of 870-274, winning 60 titles, including four at the Australian Open, two at the US Open, and one victory each at the French Open and Wimbledon. He also won a Gold Medal at the 1996 Olympics. The Armenian is credited for reviving the popularity of the game and inspiring a generation of tennis players. Agassi was exclusively interviewed in the Spring 2010 issue of *Yerevan Magazine*, where he talked about his autobiography *Open*, tennis and his Armenian heritage. Agassi's Induction Ceremony was held on July 9 at the International Tennis Hall of Fame & Museum in Newport, Rhode Island.

## Organic Farming in Armenia

The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) has been implementing a rural development program in Armavir Marz, Armenia since 2004. The organization recently initiated an Organic Farming Training Program aimed at encouraging high school students living in rural communities in Armenia to specialize in farming. In the early summer, five members of the Agricultural Clubs from COAF-supported the communities of Dalarik, Karakert, Lernagog and Miasnikian came to the United States to take part in an eight-week pilot program. The students were trained at the "Ararat Farms" located in Maine. In addition to the primary goal of the project, the trainees will also strengthen their English language skills. These students will now have the skill sets to implement what they learned when they return to Armenia.





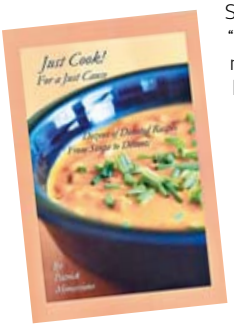
## The Seventh Attempt

The Seventh Annual International Competition in honor of great composer Aram Khachaturian opened on the late composer's birthday in June. This year's competition consisted of two nominations – piano and composition. It was attended by 36 pianists and 11 composers from various countries such as, the U.S., Canada, Australia, Lebanon, Spain, Georgia, China and the Dominican Republic, among others. Two factors ensure success at musical competitions of this caliber – talent and mettle. Tsao Peng (China) became the winner among pianists, the second place was shared by Armenian performers Zhora Sargsyan and Lilit Grigoryan, and third prize was awarded to Sonia Arshakyan (Russia). In the composition category, the first prize was shared by Alexander Iradyan from Armenia ("Six replies," Symphony No. 2) and by Tikhon Khrennikov Jr. from Russia ("Concerto for Saxophone and Chamber String Orchestra"). The official orchestra of the competition was the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia (Conductor Sergey Smbatyan), and accompanied by them the contestants performed Concerto for Piano together with Aram Khachaturian Orchestra.



## Just Cook for a Just Cause

Patrick Minassians was challenged by his eighth grade teacher to pay it forward. He put his passion for cooking to use and published an 80-page cookbook titled *Just Cook for a Just Cause*. The just cause is helping the homeless since the proceeds of the book go to the Union Station Homeless Services, the largest social service agency in the San Gabriel Valley.




"I never knew how many people were homeless in our community," he said. "I wanted to find a way to help them."

So far, he has raised close to $3,000 to benefit those in need.

## Presenting Armen Khechoumian

Los Angeles Film School student Armen Khechoumian premiered his latest project, a short film entitled "Folie à Deux," to a packed house of friends, family, classmates and critics. The first-time director, along with the rest of the members of his production company Electric Circus, could hardly stay seated as they awaited the unveiling of their most proud achievement to date (and also Khechoumian's thesis project). "My grandfather used to pull me aside and ask, 'so when are you going to law school?'" he said. "Now he pulls me aside and asks, 'so when are you going to the Oscars?'" Shot completely on 35mm film, "Folie à Deux," or "Madness of Two," is the story of a writer and an artist who live within the constrictive boundaries of their respective social classes. Although they could never afford the opportunity to be together in reality due to ther circumstances, Clive and Holly find relief through one another by using their imaginations. They fall in love, and live out the romance they will never make a reality within their fantasies. Khechoumian plans on submitting "Folie à Deux" to such film festivals as Cannes, Sundance and AFFMA next year.

## Wedding lens

Bureaucrat bookstore in Yerevan hosted the exhibition of the celebrated Australian photographer Yervant Zanazanian who, according to BBC, is one of the world's top five photographers specializing in wedding photography. Yervant, whose father was the official photographer of Ethiopia's imperial family, decided to add work during his trip to Yerevan for the exhibition. "I have already photographed Armenian weddings abroad, and this is the first wedding that I am shooting in Armenia," said Zanazanian. "I noticed a lot of elements that I didn't see in other Armenian weddings, but that I did see in Greek or Jewish weddings. We are all so interwoven that it is no longer possible to draw distinctions."



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## TUMO Center Unveiled

The Tumo Center for Creative Technologies opened its doors for the youth of Armenia on August 14. The Tumo Center, named in honor of famous poet and writer Hovhannes Toumanian, is to give the Armenian youth a state-of-the-art technology center where instructors expose them to the fields of digital filmmaking and media creation, video game development, animation, and web development, among other IT fields. The center is an innovative, open media studio in the heart of Yerevan with computing and technology galore making it the most advanced building in Armenia. Its plan is to build a lasting difference for generations of young professionals (ages 12-18) in Armenia and beyond. The initiator of the project is Sam Simonian, an Internet entrepreneur from Dallas. One of the board members on project is Alexander Seropian of Disney Interactive Studios, who was featured in the July/August issue.

## 21 Year-old for President of France

Leave it to an Armenian to stir things up. Maxime Verner is making a name for himself in France. First, he campaigned to allow 18 year-olds to run for political office. After all, if they can vote, they should be able to run for the positions they vote for. Verner, whose mother is Armenian, has now decided to run for President of France. His purpose is to represent the youth. Win or lose, he's got people talking.





## Up!

More than 1,200 people gathered at Northern Avenue in Yerevan to color the summer sky with balloons. This fiesta is another flash mob of the Tapelo Youth Organization, organized by the Dreamflash Bubble Festival in Yerevan for the past two years. Information about the flash mob spread through the social network. The Flash mob was accompanied by a concert organized by the Armenian Youth Foundation. At the end, participants of the balloon fiesta simultaneously launched their balloons into the sky.



## Cascade in memories

The Cafesjian Arts Center held "Cascade in Memories" exhibition on International Museum Day. The foyer of the last floor of the complex was decorated with unique photographs displaying its story from the moment of creation to present day. Among the exhibits were sketches of the architects, and the layout of the mosaic panels that were used to adorn the walls of the fountain in the 1960s, which once stood in the place of the future complex. In the same area where the Arts Center is located today, Alexander Tamanyan planned to build a park with waterfalls, thus connecting the northern and central parts of the city.

## Shakespeare forever

The National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet in Yerevan hosted the three-act premiere of Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet." According to choreographer Rudolf Kharatyan, a script unlike any other was written specially for the Yerevan city performance of the ballet. It is based on the film by Franco Zeffirelli, rather than on Shakespeare's tragedy. Its choreography, though based on a classical plot, is filled with the rhythms and impulses of modern life. "Two groups of young people meet on the street, a quarrel ensues, passions run high... they can argue, or peacefully disperse," Kharatyan said adding, "My goal was to help the young spectators find themselves in the heroes, to empathize with them. After all, this story is not a new one and is widely known." Shakespeare's heroes were embodied by contemporary leading dancers of Armenian ballet: Juliet (Jacqueline Sarkhoshyan), and Romeo (Ruben Muradyan).






## Inner Heaven

How do you achieve inner peace and self-awareness? This is the question that many have been asking for years. A self-educated survivor of the Genocide, Berjik Kurkjian, answers it based on her own experiences with Inner Heaven, a collection of self-help stories that were originally written in Farsi in the late 80s. Karine Armen, the author's daughter, has edited and translated the text into English. The 37 articles are set in chronological order, though each piece is self-contained and does not be read sequentially. Kurkjian's writing is simple and touches the reader's soul. She gives suggestions on how to live life by using positive words and thoughts. The volume also includes a number of family photographs, which give the essays a further personal context and account for the anthology's function as a semi-memoir. To find a list of stores carrying the book, visit *PhotoKarine.com*.

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## Kohar: In New Light

The story of Kohar began 13 years ago, when the talented Gohar Khachatryan brought together musicians from Gyumri and organized an orchestra and choir. Since 2002, Kohar has been touring around the world, presenting Armenian national music. The troupe's repertoire includes a wide range of medieval, spiritual and contemporary music. The geography of Kohar's world tours is quite extensive: Beirut, Cyprus, Istanbul, Moscow, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, San Francisco, Montreal, Toronto, Damascus, Aleppo, among others. Their recent show took place on May 28 in Yerevan. The well-known Kohar ensemble, under the directorship of Sebouh Abgaryan, performed along with the stars of the Armenian pop on the Liberty Square. The highlight of the program was the 3D-projection on the Opera House. Over the past three years, within the frames of the projects, the Armenian schools around the world have distributed 25,000 DVDs, which can all be used as teaching tools. Every musical piece has subtitles in Latin, which allows people in other countries who are not fluent or do not speak Armenian to learn and sing the songs.

## Yerevan Magazine to be Featured in Documentary

Former Baywatch actress and Playboy playmate Donna D'Errico and her film crew stopped by the *Yerevan Magazine* offices in Los Angeles to film a scene for her documentary with Senior Editor Manouk Akopyan, who wrote a feature profile story on D'Errico. The documentary details her preparation to Mount Ararat. It is titled "ReModel" and scheduled to air on the Discovery Channel Networks. In the July/August issue, D'Errico tells *Yerevan Magazine* how her near-death experience, faith, God, and the Bible, has inspired her to climb Mount Ararat in search of Noah's Ark.






## Moving On

On the eve of completion of her mission in Armenia, the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, Marie Yovanovich, presented works from the U.S. Embassy's "Pastoral Nature" art collection to Armenian cultural figures, politicians, diplomats and journalists. All the visitors of the Embassy enjoyed the bright paintings of juicy pomegranates, giant trees and vast sea. The collection consists of 66 works created by 42 contemporary American and Armenian artists. It includes four photographs from Tony Tasset's "My Garden" series (Tasset is the author of the famous 33-foot sculpture of the eyeball set in downtown Chicago), and a giant self-portrait of a popular and esteemed American artist and photographer, Chuck Close. The collection also includes several works of the artist-twins Doug and Mike Starn from their well known "Structure of Thought" series. Starn brothers' exhibition held in Metropolitan Museum last year turned into a notable event in the world of art.

## 70 Graduates in Ancient Ani

Graduates of the Yerevan State University's History department have their commencement in various historical sites in Armenia. This year, the department decided to go across the boarder and hold the ceremony in the ancient ruins of Ani not only in celebration of their achievements, but also the kingdom's 1050th anniversary. The newly graduates also had the opportunity to tour throughout Western Armenia including regions of Kars, Van, Ardahan and Bayazet. The university hopes to continue this tradition in the future.




## India's Armenians

Liz Chater, the descendant of Sir Paul Chater, recently published a book, *Armenian Graves, Inscriptions and Memorials in India – DACCA – 1722-1977*. The book contains in excess of 160 full color photographs of all the remaining graves at the Armenian Church Dhaka, Bangladesh, along with 25 family tree charts. "The reason I decided to publish such a book was because there is very little family history information about the Armenian community of Dhaka between the 18th and early 20th centuries," said Liz and added, "The Armenian Church at Dhaka no longer has a community around it, but since I am passionate about Armenian history in India and completely committed to trying to help preserve and record whatever is left, I felt it only right that the Dhaka Armenians should forever be remembered, and my book on the Armenian graves is a simple way of doing so."

## Armenian Brandy and the End of WWII

Winston Churchill was a sinner because he drank and smoked – a lot. Turns out, Churchill's sins helped shape the brandy distribution. BBC News recently wrote a piece about Armenia's Brandy, specifically, Ararat. In it, the author quoted Churchill and said, "Like many people, Armenians have a favourite Winston Churchill quotation. Asked the secret of his long life, they tell you that the great man replied: 'Cuban cigars, Armenian brandy and no sport!'" Brandy is very similar to cognac. Cognac originated in France and the French have all rights to the word, cognac. The brandy must be served in a glass that has a more narrow top. This allows air to flow through while keeping the scent trapped in. The glass should not have a stem because the heat from the hand allows the scent of the brandy to come out.



# Harsanik.com and Fancy That!

## Event Design & Coordination

kicked off their second annual Premier Bridal Event just in time for the wedding season. More than 1,500 people attended the extravagant bridal show that took place in the Huntington Ballroom at the historic Langham Hotel in Pasadena, California.



Brides and their wedding parties spent the afternoon mingling with local vendors as they sipped signature coffee drinks and sampled sweets and appetizers. As popular entertainment options for weddings, well-known wedding singers Sako and Arno kept the guests in high spirits with their performances.

As an added bonus, the Premier Bridal Event presented upcoming wedding trends with two mini fashion shows. Models walked the runway in the newest couture collections by renowned designer Ines De Santo. Fine jewelry was provided by Vanna K Bridal & Fashion Jewelry.

The show brought together over 60 of LA's finest wedding professionals catering specifically to the 'Armenian bride.' Weddings are huge affairs in the Armenian Community, with the average Armenian couple spending an estimated $70,000 on their big day!

As the event came to a close, guests were excited about having new ideas and resources to help check off their wedding to-do lists. Next year's soiree will be even grander according to Marineh Khanoyan, the Co-Founder of Harsanik.com. "Expect a new location, an array of new vendors and more entertainment," Khanoyan said, "We are very excited about the third annual Premier Bridal Event!" Harsanik.com will once again partner up with the talented Christine Zohrabians from Fancy That! Events to bring together some of the best vendors from Southern California. Now that's an event we can vow to attend.

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# A City of Many Stories



Trey Ratcliff

# y any rs

**After days of flight delays, I found myself carefully gliding through the frozen snow to Bryant Park to explore the collections at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week in New York City. With press pass in tow, camera lights flashing, and the heat of the runway making the cold outside seem like a world away, I was ready to get back to work. Indeed, this was one of the many New York moments that can only be experienced once.**

Text Mari Gezalyan

My first home in the big city was two blocks down from Ground Zero in the Financial District. With the historical South Sea Port a five-minute walk, Tribeca in my backyard, and Soho an earshot away, the concept of distance and neighborhoods in New York has its own understanding. Its urban setting is exceptional, giving the city one of its many allures. Along with its own perception of distance, is the conception of time, as Albert Einstein once said, "Time is relevant to where you are." In New York, a minute is an hour elsewhere.

## Ellis Island, a Survivor's Gateway to Mecca

For decades immigrants to the United States have made their way through Ellis Island. Armenians at the turn of the century were no exception to the flock of immigrants that made their way into the promise land. For many this journey guaranteed that their future generations would survive.

With the onslaught of the Armenian Genocide and the civil unrest in Turkey, many Armenians found themselves on that treacherous voyage. Prior to investigating the history of the people who crossed through this tiny island I was struck by images from *The Godfather, Part II* and Vito Corleone's voyage via the island as they come upon the Statue of Liberty. Never did I presume that my ancestors would have taken this same trip from Adana during the first wave of Armenian migration into the States. Ellis Island holds all the original records of those who escaped the Armenian Genocide and settled into such places as New York City, Fresno, and other regions of the country. Today Ellis Island is no longer used for what it once was and for many, it is a forgotten place overpowered by the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. Dedicated to the United States in 1886 by the French, the State of Liberty was designed by Frédéric Bartholdi and Alexandre Gustave Eiffel. With the broken chain at her feet and with the tablet of laws in her arm, the statue has become an icon of freedom.



## The City of Burroughs

Whenever anyone ever thinks about New York the images that come to mind are the Empire State Building, Times Square, or Central Park. Nonetheless the city is comprised of five Burroughs: Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, the almost always forgotten Staten Island and, of course, the island of Manhattan. Each Burrough has an accent and attitude of its own. Brooklyn is known for the hipsters and the Slavs, Bronx is known for the roughnecks, Staten Island for its tanners, Queens for its Greeks, Middle Eastern and everything in between, and Manhattan for its social elite. A 20 minute ride on the G train from midtown Manhattan is Astoria, Queens, it is an anchorage of familiar Armenian cuisines. Though there is no one kind of Armenian in Queens, many in Astoria are either second or third generation, like most New York Armenians. During World War II, writer William Saroyan was stationed in Astoria as a soldier. Taking the express D train south is Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Not only is this part of town home of the United States Army Post, Fort Hamilton, it is also the place that many Armenians have called home for years. "I have lived here since I was a little girl. Back then we only had a couple of Armenian families in Bay Ridge," says Nicole, 72, as we take a walk down her street. "But things changed throughout the years as the community grew," she continued.

"I have lived here since I was a little girl. Back then we only had a couple of Armenian families in Bay Ridge," said Nicole, 72, as we took a walk down her street. "...Armenians are no longer that mysterious race, rather, we are the group of people who are able to thrive under any circumstance."

→
The Statue of Liberty was a gift of international friendship from the people of France to the people of the United States.

↓
Brighton Beach was dubbed "Little Odessa" by the locals long ago, due to many residents having come from Odessa, Ukraine.



NomanZ






Tanya Kechichian

←
St. Illuminator's Armenian Apostolic Cathedral, located on East 27th.

"Armenians are no longer that mysterious race, rather, we are the group of people who are able to thrive under any circumstance." Going even further south is the neighborhood of Brighton Beach. Neil Simon's "Brighton Beach Memoirs" made this place infamous but today it is the home of many Armenians who left post Soviet-Armenia. With Little Odessa and Coney Island, Brighton Beach is a melting pot of Eastern-Europeans, delicious pelmeni, and Armenian brandy. It is the escape from the city when looking for a place that will remind you of the proverbial. "You Armenian, yes, yes?" asked an older gentleman one afternoon while on an expedition of the area. Thirty minutes later I found myself seated at a table with a glass of vodka in front of me at an Armenian restaurant. The place was filled with the sounds and smells of home with rich boreks, dolma and kyufta. It is here that you see men in barrettes and wool coats, smoking cigarettes and playing backgammon on the sidewalk while kids run amongst them, a scene reminiscent of the old streets of Yerevan. Brighton Beach reminds me of Soviet Armenia with Russians, Poles, and Armenians all speaking their own interpretation of Russian. ▸




Tanya Kochchian

→
The international grocery store Kalustyan's was opened in 1944..

## An Island of Many Churches

Back on the island of Manhattan is one of the oldest Armenian institutions in New York – the Armenian Evangelical Church. In 1896 Reverend H.H. Khazoyan, led his first sermon; over a century later the church still thrives. This church has welcomed a wave of migrant Armenians and provided a cultural familiarity for most who escaped Turkey. Decades after the establishment of the Evangelical Armenians, a migration of priests from the Eastern Prelacy ascertained St. Illuminator's Armenian Apostolic Church. "We are having our 95th anniversary celebration... you should come. It's nice seeing young Armenians at the church," smiled Mary, 75 years old and a third generation Armenian originally from Chicago. The Prelacy originally served the entire United States as one of the oldest Christian sects. It was not until recent years with the growth of the Armenian culture in the States, namely California, that the Prelacies were divided by territories. Throughout the years, with the younger generation of Armenians leaving the city, the church has struggled to maintain. Nevertheless, in the post 9/11 world, the relevant church saw a rise in the number of people during services. On a later visit to the church with my fiancé, we happened to stumble upon a baptism of two brothers, Hagop and Hayk. There in front of us was the future generation of Armenians in the city. "Look around you each day and remember how far we have come as a people. The Armenian spirit will never die," stated Rev. Father Nareg Terterian as he brought his prayers to a close. Up in Washington Heights is another church with a darker history: the Holy Cross Apostolic Church, constructed in 1925. The history of the church is tied in with political unrest and a sinister past with the murder of the Eastern Diocese Archbishop, Levon Tourian during the Divine Liturgy. From the late 1930s to the early 1950s, architect Manoug Exerjian incorporated a crypt for the deceased Archbishop and renovated the church hoping the new facelift would reunite the Armenian cause. Though it has almost been a century since that fateful night the church still has an air of eeriness and eminence of the bloodshed.

## Moving on Uptown

After a year of living the downtown life, I made my move to the Upper West Side. Manhattan is divided up in its own neighborhoods broken down within Uptown, Midtown and Downtown. Downtown Manhattan is where everything takes place – from financial transactions, innovations in design, new art movements, and everything between grunge and Wall Street. Lower Manhattan was where the first Dutch settlers established New Netherlands later known as New Amsterdam in the 1770s. Here is where Chinatown lies right next to Little Italy, Soho, Greenwich Village, Chelsea, Uptown Sinclair's garish Meat Packing District, East Village, Flatiron District, Union Square, Brooklyn Bridge, Financial District, Tribeca, Gramercy, East Village, West Village, Battery Park, and the South Sea Port. The gridlines of the neighborhoods are confusing and meshed together in the small space. The most historical sites in the United States are within this region of Manhattan.
On Wall Street is the Federal Hall, which was the first capitol building of the United States, where the Bill of Rights was introduced and where President George Washington was inaugurated. Though the original building from 1700 was demolished, the Federal Hall National Memorial was built in its place in 1842. Today there is a large statue of Washington in the exact location of where it was believed he took his oath as president; the Hall also houses the bible on which he took that oath as well as the earliest documents in the United States. For the past 10 years, the skyline of downtown New York has had a gaping void that was once occupied by the World Trade Center. The attacks on 9/11 were the first of its kind since Pearl Harbor during World War II. Many of us were stuck at home or in our cars getting the information from a distance, but for New Yorkers the attacks were felt firsthand. The City will never be what it was before 9/11. Days following the attack there was a particular smell throughout the city and a somber silence. New Yorkers were saying "please" and "thank you" and giving up seats on the subway. Ten years later there still is that reminder downtown with that open space; there are plaques in front of fire and police stations of the names of those

The City will never be what it was before 9/11. Days following the attack there was a particular smell throughout the city and somber silence. New Yorkers were saying "please" and "thank you" and giving up seats on the subway. Ten years later there still is that reminder downtown with that open space.




Marin



Angela Rutherford

↑ George Washington on Wall Street's Federal Hall, where he took his oath.

← Ground Zero: The World Trade Center site, located in Lower Manhattan.

that were killed trying to save the lives of people in the towers. "This City will never forget," stated the deputy bureau president. With the city moving into the future, the space of Ground Zero is currently under construction with seven new towers being built. On September 12, 2011, with its 10 year anniversary, the National September 11 Memorial and Museum is set to be completed and opened.

Moving up towards Midtown is where all the New York magic happens with Times Square, Broadway, Rockefeller Center, Fifth Avenue, the Empire State Building, the Museum of Modern Art, Bryant Park, Columbus Circle, Madison Square Garden, Herald Square, the Garment District and home to most major corporations. Midtown has everything from flashing lights, city hustle and bustle, and rows of shops. Here lies the infamous Macy's department store on 34th street, which held the world record for the largest store in the world until a few years ago. With over nine floors, the store is unlike anything in the United States and is a shopping haven for fashionistas. Macy's is also known for their famous yearly Thanksgiving Day parade, which will be celebrating its 85th anniversary this fall. The parade is known for its massive helium filled balloons depicting popular cultural icons that are marched around the city blocks amid performances by Broadway musicals and celebrities.

Down the street from Macy's is the Empire State Building named after the city's nickname, which held the world's record as the tallest building for over 40 years. It is this building that King Kong climbed to escape capture and hosted many of the romantic rendezvous of both fictional and nonfunctional lovers. Prior to the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building located on 42nd Street and Lexington held the record as the tallest building. Built in art deco style, this building is the essence of the New York spirit. It captures the dark spirit of Gotham with its projecting gargoyles overlooking the city, along with the timeless elegance that is New York. Centered in the middle of the city is one of the biggest commercial intersections, Times Square. It is here that over

**Big Apple Snapple Facts**

- New York City is the most populated city with over 8.3 million people – with an estimated 40,000 Armenians.
- 21 percent of the population is foreign born.
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art contains over two million works, which make it one of the largest museums in the world.
- In the 1600s, settlers introduced apples to the city.
- The Holland Tunnel is the world's first ventilated tunnel. It connects New York to New Jersey and is a designated National Historical Landmark.
- New York City was the capital of the United States in the 1780s.
- St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral is the first Armenian Apostolic Church to be constructed in North America.
- There are four Armenian Churches in Manhattan.





Nazik Armenakyan

a million people gather each year to ring in the New Year with the dropping of the Waterford crystal ball on the top of One Times Square building with the unmistakable logo of CNN News. Notably one of the most famous sights in the world, this small space is home to the Naked Cowboy, the New York Times Tower, Conde Nast Publications, MTV, Morgan Stanley, and Ernst & Young to name a few.

A few steps away is the Theatre District where over 40 theatres house the most popular musicals, plays, and the Tony Awards, the theatre's equivalent to the Academy Awards. In 1939, William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life* opened at the historical Booth Theatre located on 45th Street and Broadway. It was this play that won him his Pulitzer Prize for Drama and New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Many Armenian actors and actresses have made their start on Broadway, such as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding's* Andrea Martin, who won a Tony Award for her performance in *My Favorite Year.*

At the mouth of Central Park is where Uptown begins as well as the divide between the East and West side. In the middle of these regions lies the National History Landmark of about 843 acres: Central Park. A true gem, this natural getaway from the concrete jungle is filled with wildlife, flowers, trees, and lakes. In 1873, the Angel of the Waters was placed at the entrance of the park at Central Park South and in 1869 the Belvedere Castle was built, which has become an observatory. Though the park was left to be vandalized from the 1960s to the 1980s, for the past 20 plus years it has been restored to most of its natural elements. On the lower east end of the park is the Metropolitan Museum of Art, home to one of the largest Egyptian artifacts. In the middle of the park is the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir, which at one point provided water to the city. The park also holds one of three Cleopatra's Needles, an obelisk that was erected at the Temple of Ra in Ancient Egypt. The other two obelisks can be found in London and Paris. The story of how New York City came to own the needle is to this day unknown. Entering from West 72nd Street into the park is where one can find the Strawberry Fields, a memorial that was built for the late Beatles front man, John Lennon. Though it has been over 30 years since the singer's death, the site is always filled with flowers, peace signs, and prayers. It is one of those rare spots in the noisy city that offers tranquility.

The Upper West Side is home to Juilliard School, The Lincoln Center, which is the new home to Mercedes Benz Fashion Week, Colombia University, Gray's Papaya, The Dakota, the Natural History Museum, brownstones, and the heart of the *Westside Story*. It is uptown that most New Yorkers call home, I myself became one of those at end of last year. Living on the West Side, the city does not seem as big as it does downtown. You actually know at least one neighbor, become part of a neighborhood, and start seeing familiar faces. Living a block away from the park and steps away from the most authentic cuisines, this New York is only experienced via the locals.

The Upper East Side is home to New York City's most affluent and was once home to Grace Kelly and Woody Allen. The Upper



Trey Ratcliff

New York City women are unlike any in the world, they are a mixture of Europeans, Latin Americans, and a collection of America's most fierce. Price tag for many is an unknown concept and wearing unknown designers is a trademark.



Nazik Armenakyan

← New York, clear, wet and upside down

↑ Times Square, billed as the "Crossroads of the World."

East Side used to be filled with mansions that were the homes of America's most elite such as the Rockefellers, the Roosevelts, and the Whitney families; despite the fact that most of the mansions have been demolished, the few that survive have become diplomatic houses. The United Nations and most European establishments on the East Side represent the most affluent in the world. Walking around the Central Park East one can see flags of foreign lands and hear unknown languages. Not all of the East Side is posh and not everyone has breakfast at Tiffany's. The East Side is also home to one of the largest rug markets where everyone knows that Armenians are the ones to go to, with merchants like Hayk Oltaci and the Tufenkian's setting the bar for luxury rugs in New York for years.

## A Fashionable City

New York City women are unlike any in the world; they are a mixture of Europeans, Latin Americans, and a collection of America's most fierce. Price tag for many is an unknown concept and wearing unknown designers is a trademark. Fashion in the city is not about the big-ticket brand but rather the up and coming or those who only work through special order. But the face of fashion has changed with globalization. The historical Garment District is easily missed and most factories have shut down due to competition overseas. Nevertheless, fashion in New York still holds its allure.

With the ever-changing industry, New York's fashion industry recently underwent major changes. One of the most devastating ones to take place was the change in location of Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week. Located near Fifth Avenue, Bryant Park harbored the entire majesty that fashion gurus sought. It was here that people like Dauphine Guinness shared a glass of champagne with you before Marc Jacob's show. But being fashion, nothing lasts forever. In 2011, Fashion Week was held at its new venue at Lincoln Center. Though there was more space, the intimate setting of the industry faded away into commercialization. "I wish we were back at Bryant Park, I mean the shows are supposed to be exclusive!" stated Kate Dimmock, fashion editor of People Style Watch over coffee one afternoon.

This change may have taken place in fashion but in New York, the concept will never fade. With such institutions as Fashion Institute of Technology and the highly esteemed Parson's, some fashion forecasts are simply not foreseeable.

## The New City

New York City is about growth, constant changes, and moving forward. As we make our way into the teens of the millennium, the city is shaking its past. No longer does New York victimize itself, but rather it has surpassed what everyone thought would happen in a post 9/11 world, this year marking its tenth anniversary. The spirit of New York is like the spirit of an Armenian, always reinventing itself according to the circumstances and establishing itself as invincible. In Frank Sinatra's song "New York, New York," he states, "if you can make it here you can make it anywhere." Making it in New York is not about being the Wall Street superpower or living in a sky-high penthouse, it is about survival; this city is the modern exemplar of a survivor. ■



# New York Runway Show

Bridal fashion is unlike anything that is put out there. Each dress is one of a kind, made to embody the spirit of the individual on her big day. Many brides only get to wear a wedding dress once in their lives. The process of picking out that gown can be either instant or painstaking. Whether it is following tradition and wearing a cathedral princess gown or mini tube dress encrusted in crystals, they say that finding the right gown is like finding the right man: what may work for one bride may not for another.

Text **Mari Gezalyan**

With bridal fashion week wrapping up in New York City, the brides of 2011 are in for a whole new era of what it means to be a bride shown in the art works of St. Pucci, the romance of Ines Di Santo and the elegance of Lazaro.

## St. Pucci:

St. Pucci's 2011 fall collection celebrates its 25 year anniversary by producing one of a kind, avant-garde masterpieces for their brides. Designer Rani Totman hones in on her roots based out of India and Thailand with the minute detailing found in her collection. The St. Pucci bride is not afraid of standing out on her day with flares of silk, organza, and exotic beading. She is not the type of bride that conforms to tradition, but rather brings her uniqueness to the modern era. With clustered jewels, exotic feathers, tiered lace, each gown is exclusive and honors the traditional understanding of what it means to be couture.

The silhouettes of St. Pucci bring the couture house into the future with modern twists on the feminine form. Textured fabrics, Ricamo net, and Alencon lace are manipulated to create the illusion of distinctive textures and shapes. From plunging to sweetheart necklines combined with whimsical elements, her day is truly enchanting. The St. Pucci bride shines in luxurious and lavish fabrics while remaining ageless.

## Ines Di Santo:

Inspired by her Italian heritage, Ines Di Santo's fall 2011/winter 2012 collection echoes the picturesque landscapes of Florence, Italy circa the Renaissance. Her designs capture the eternal familiarity with modern elegance in lightness and luminosity.













Baroque inspired beading on the bodice combined with the richness of the tulle skirt give any silhouette a dramatic feel.

From princess ball gowns to inconspicuous mermaid gowns effortlessly draped in silk bows, Di Santo's designs give her bride the ability to transform tradition eternally. Each gown has an element of surprise with soft off-the-shoulder sleeves, antique silks, and handmade flowers. For the bride that wants to establish her own traditions, Di Santo provides a bridal version of the mini dress. The couture dresses are entirely hand beaded for the fashion forward bride. The Di Santo bride does not conform or fit the mold, rather she is a woman who has a keen insight to who she is and what she wants to project on her day.

## Lazaro:

Ivories, platinums, champagnes, and natural whites flowed onto the catwalk for Lazaro's fall 2011 collection. Soft tones with a mixture of romance embrace the natural beauty of any bride. The classic look that has always been mastered by Lazaro has been revamped with silk organza and raw edged silks. The feminine collection celebrates the purity of a bride with soft fabrics and array of silhouettes. Colored silk belts with jewels hug the waistline giving the gowns a pop of pastel while echoing the soft hues of the whites.

The style of the season takes the bride back to the classic look with understated and delicate features that almost make her float. With flower petals individually hand cut, pleats of silk folded one by one, and cascading rosettes flowing off the shoulder, the Lazaro bride is a portrait of elegance. ■

# A Recipe for the Heart



A humanitarian with a passion for cooking felt called to action after the horrific events of 9/11. Named an Honorary Firefighter by the New York City Fire Department, Angie Kardashian impacted the lives of firefighters who had lost their brothers in the tragic incident. With a successful business in Tustin, California, she left everything behind and headed east, where she began her "cooking ministry." Now, a flight attendant based out of New York, she continues to tell her story as a volunteer tour guide at the World Trade Center Museum.

Interview **Lilit Barsegyan** | Photo **Louis Trinh**

Growing up in Springfield, Massachusetts I was very involved in the small Armenian community we had. Moving to California in my early 20's gave me an opportunity to be even more active. In 1980, I opened an Italian restaurant in Tustin, located near the former Marine Corps Air Station Tustin and El Toro Marine Base. Consequently, most of my customers were Marines and their family members, which is how I became a big part of the Marine Corps community. I became a member of the Tustin Chamber of Commerce and served as chairman of the board for two years. The many awards I received throughout the years had been such an honor, but a more rewarding accomplishment for me was hosting dinner on Thanksgiving Day. This annual event grew from feeding 125 Marines to more than 750 and eventually became a tradition that lasted 18 years. They always told me, 'Angie, if you weren't doing this for us, we wouldn't have had a Thanksgiving meal. But after almost 20 years of operating my business, I lost a big part of my life; due to government cutbacks, both air stations were shut down in 1999.

For my involvement with the Marines I received the Navy Distinguished Public Service Medal – one of the highest ranks a civilian can receive. This was awarded to me by the Marine Corps Commandant after the bases closed. Shortly after, I arrived at the Pentagon to attend the retirement ceremony of my good friend General McCorkle who was the head of all aviation in the Marine Corps. Strolling in a golf cart, I was given a tour of the Pentagon, which also took me to the Marine Navy Wing. I decided to extend my trip and flew to New York. I ended up having lunch one day in the Twin Towers at one of my most frequented restaurants, Windows on the World (North Tower), and went up to the observation deck (South Tower). Then a month later it was all gone. What are the odds of anyone being at all three of those precise locations merely a month before the terrorist attacks of 9/11? Horrified by such a tragedy, I knew I had to do something. Through my prayers I began to revaluate my life and decided to make a significant change. I sold my restaurant and headed to New York on Thanksgiving Day, a day in my life that had a special meaning. When I arrived in November I went to five different firehouses and asked them if they would allow me to cook for them for the time being. I wasn't sure if they would even let me. After they told me I can, I had to go back home and figure out all my finances. I wasn't able to return until May 2002, but it actually turned out to be a more opportune time. All the moral support had faded away and the grief was beginning to sink in. I felt so honored to be a part of their brotherhood and listen to their stories. In a way they brought me into that brotherhood. And just for that hour they would laugh and feel good about themselves. In that horrific time I just wanted to be able to make them smile and laugh – and I did. In my life I found that giving back brings you so much more than cars, jewelry, clothes and money. It's what you feel on the inside about what kind of a person you are. As a matter of fact, if I could sell everything and not have to work, I'd go join the Peace Corps and just volunteer my whole life. What I had originally wanted to do for a few months for 20 firehouses turned into cooking for two years for 103 fire companies in all five boroughs. To make this financially possible I refinanced my house twice and used all the profits from the sale of my restaurant. They asked to make sure that people never forget "about what happened here to our brothers." It's a goal in my life now to never let people forget about 9/11. That's why I continue to tell people my story.



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# Sense of Time

Rima Kazumyan is only 25 years old and already holds the position of Assistant Chief Designer at Emporio Armani men's clothing line. Despite her young age, she feels very comfortable in the world of high fashion as she carries on the trade and traditions of her family. With her grandmother the director of the lead fashion house in Yerevan, a conservatory professor mother, and a successful entrepreneur father, Kazumyan's success in the world of high fashion is hardly a coincidence.

Interview **Artavazd Yeghiazaryan**

**Rima, how does the design and development of a new collection begin?**
Generally, Armani himself shares his ideas with us. He proposes certain starting points after which the theme, color palette and fabrics are chosen and the sketches and collages are made. The process of creating a collection is ongoing: there are times when we make some changes when the model is already in fitting, and sometimes even while on the podium. As a result we get a new collection that generates world fashion. That's when we say, "Yes, we did a great job!" The next day everything starts over. It is a never ending cycle. I draw on my free time, I make sketches, think of new ideas, and I never get to relax. Aside from designing clothes, I also work as a graphic designer. The company's administration commended me for the technique I was taught at Marangoni Institute in Milan and assigned me to do all of the graphics as well.

**How does it feel to generate world fashion?**
People in Italy adore Georgio Armani because he creates universal clothing. People of different generations wear his fashion on special occasions and in everyday life. That is the result of the tremendous work done by the greats of the fashion world. It also brings about a huge responsibility that I feel all the time. First, it is because I am constantly working with Mr. Armani himself. Second, I can not forget our clients even for a second. We have to predict what will work for the next season for the successful, smart, handsome and energetic men working in a fast paced environment, and convince them that it is our product they need. Our competitors don't sleep! ▸



Malik Akyan


Rima Kazumyan



→
Rima Kazumyan and her boss, Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani.

**How do you feel when you see people wearing clothes created by you?**
The very first time it happened, the feeling I had was absolutely indescribable. Today, I often see young guys on the streets wearing Emporio Armani shirts with my graphics on them. It puts a smile on my face every time.

**What do you pay attention to first when designing new clothing?**
The popular and easily recognizable Armani style was created a long time ago. We try not to overstep its boundaries. The company at one point didn't approve my sketches because they were done in "Armani style." Perhaps that wasn't coincidental since I've been dreaming about working here since I was 13!

**Does being fashionable mean one should look beautiful, or is it more important to stand out from the crowd?**
Being fashionable presupposes having one's own style and being able to sense the time. Clothing must suit the wearer, be appropriate and help the person make the right impression. A well put together ensemble can help you gain success. Judging from my experience, I can say that people who stand out from others and make the right impression are the ones who have their own style, sense of proportion, and understand which garments fit them best. And that is when a person looks truly fashionable, instead of imitating fashion magazines and trends. For what fits perfectly on one person may not look nice on another.

**During the counterculture revolution in the 1960s with the hippie generation, clothing was one of the most important tools of protest. Is it as important today for a person to express himself through attire as it was then?**
Certainly. However, before all else, the person must possess an identity of their own. There are times when you meet an extremely interesting person, and, already upon saying goodbye, you think of him as someone very modern, stylish, and bright. But later, you have a hard time remembering what he was wearing. The person himself is in the forefront. Designers merely help enhance the impression made by personality, and by no means do they intended to "kill" it with fashionable clothing.

**According to legend, clothing was created because of man's prudence. However, today it is more a means of making a shocking impression.**
Public figures are the ones who need it as a tool. They turn to it in order to amuse the crowd, or use it for commercial purposes. People ask for a show and they get it. That is not a fashion tendency but rather a way to attract attention. It is the desire to stand out among the vast majority of singers, artists, and other news-makers. Sometimes, unfortunately, even common people "suffer" from it.

**How different is the perception of fashion in Europe and in Armenia?**
The Italian woman, as a rule, is well groomed, has a nice haircut, light make-up and carries high quality accessories.





**Rima Kazumyan**

Rima's grandmother – the Director of the House of Clothing Design in Armenia – Rima Oganezova, was the one to detect her granddaughter's talent for drawing. Soon the gifted child was studying with her grandfather, Zorayr Kazumyan, an academic at the International Engineering Academy, who enjoyed painting as a hobby. Rima received a lot of help and support from her parents Inga and Gennady Kazumyan as well. From 1996 to 2000, Rima studied at Atex fashion center's studio school for kids in Yerevan, specializing in Fashion Design. In 2004 she completed a course of study at Central St. Martins College of Art and Design in London majoring in Fashion Promotion. In 2005 she completed a course at Accademia Italiana in Florence with a specialty in Fashion Design and Illustration. Two years later Rima graduated with honors from the Marangoni Institute in Milan, obtaining a Master's degree in Fashion Design, after which she was invited to work as a designer for the women's clothing line at Frankie Morello Company in Milan. Since 2008, Rima has been holding the position of Assistant Chief Designer of the men's clothing line at Emporio Armani.





She can be easily singled out from the crowd: she is dressed discreetly but looks stylish. Her attire is always appropriate, and she doesn't wear high heels if she has to walk much. She strictly differentiates her casual dresses and evening gowns. Her entire image speaks of dignity and a sense of proportion. It is the sense of proportion that Armenian women very often lack. Our fashionable beauties carry everything in extreme abundance, be it the make-up, jewelry or blending colors. They simply imitate someone, copy images from a fashion magazine, chase prestige and costliness and very often– quantity. But it is not necessary to change one's wardrobe every year in order to look a la mode. You will only need two to three new items – you can change the width of the pants, the length of the skirt, silhouette of the dress, or use accessories in a new way.

**And what about the men?**

In Europe, men follow the fashion trends almost as much as the women do. Meanwhile, they do not consider a brand name an end in itself. It's just that clothing helps them create the right image. However, in Armenia, a fashionably dressed man is a rarity.

**What do you think of the current condition of design in Armenia?**

People in my profession encounter major hardships in Armenia because there the client is the one to dictate to the designer, whereas it should be the other way around. Otherwise, we will be stuck in time and not develop. We do not teach a doctor how to cure us or what surgery to perform, right? The customer must realize that in order for him to look fashionable he has to trust the professionals. Especially considering the fact that there are so many good designers. ■

# SHE IS ELLE



Few women are as influential and well-known in France as Valérie Toranian. The Editor-in-Chief of ELLE magazine, the French Edition, and the Brand Manager of its 42 international editions is a forerunner of modern day feminism. Her opinions on the essential societal issues are quoted by countless media sources worldwide. Her firm stance on the defense of rights and quality of life of women makes a difference in French politics and the legislature. Her approach to beauty and fashion steers the course of the multibillion-dollar fashion industry globally.

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



It was only natural that working on the fashion issue *Yerevan Magazine's* path led us to Paris, the fashion capital of the world. It is also the place where Valérie Toranian leads the world's largest fashion magazine. The offices of ELLE Magazine are located in the Levallois-Perret suburb of Paris. Exiting the subway we face the glassy hemispherical tall building of the Lagardere Active – one of the largest media groups in the world. The many logos and signs decorating the entrance foyer signal that we have entered the Mecca of the French media world. Paris Match, Europe 1, AutoMoto, Tele7, Femina and ELLE are among the numerous branches of Lagardele Active. We take the elevator to the fifth floor and follow the narrow corridor behind the glass walls, both sides of which the various offices of ELLE are working. Valérie greets us in her office with large windows, tall bookshelves and a wall covered with clippings of ELLE's cover pages. She is welcoming and warm.

Valérie Toranian was born in Paris in 1962. Her mother is French and teaches French and Latin to high school students. Her father was born in 1925 in Marseilles, after his family fled the Genocide. Later his family moved to Paris where he met Valérie's mother. The couple had two girls and a boy. Growing up, Valérie was very close to her grandmother on her father's side. She lived with her grandmother who owned an apartment on the fifth floor while her parents lived in an apartment on the floor below. Every Wednesday, grandmother took Valérie and her brother to the Armenian school where the children learned Armenian. There, at the age of 18, Toranian met her husband. They married seven years later and had two sons whom they promptly gave Armenian names, Vazken and Aris, and who are now 21 and 16, respectively. Eventually, the marriage fell apart and, although now she lives with another man, her past still remains important part of her life.

## Surprise the Editor

Toranian entered her career in journalism as a freelancer writing on a variety of topics but often on fashion and beauty. She started working for ELLE's beauty department in 1983. She was hired by the magazine in 1994 and by 1996, she became the deputy editor of the fashion department. Her next promotion was the position of the managing editor, followed by the position of the Vice Editor-in-Chief. Since 2002 she has been the Editor-in-Chief and the Brand Manager of ELLE magazine's international editions. "I had spent the greater part of my career inside of ELLE. It is fantastic to work for this magazine because we have a vision. Our publication is not just about fashion, beauty, but also many other things. In ELLE you can find local and international news, articles about society, women in other countries, relationships, and much more. We cover political issues, we write in defense of women's rights, etc... It is really very interesting to work in this magazine," she summarizes the brief overview of her career. ELLE is the magazine with the largest circulation within Lagardère Active, the international media conglomerate led by Arnaud Lagardère. It operates in 40 countries and includes print publications, radio and television, newspaper and magazines, among other venues. The guiding principle of Helen Lazareff, the founder of ELLE, was set 40 years ago with a a goal to foster the development and emancipation of women and improve their place in society. This principle stays to this day. Toranian was inspired by the vision of ELLE from the start. "I am not here to make a revolution but to serve and continue the rich heritage," she stated. Valérie and her predominantly female team are passionate about their mission. "Valérie is in a constant state of questioning and she is never a doubt inhibitor," said her boss, Bruno Lesouëf, the Chief of Magazine Publications at Lagardère Active. Toranian comes from a standpoint that nothing is set in stone and everything could be questioned. Her questions charge her team to find answers, "It is not uncommon that

we send text messages for 23 hours straight because we are excited by the subject. I like working with girls that are passionate and little crazy." Her advice for the young journalists? "Always surprise the editor."

## It's All in a Day's Work

"My typical day starts at seven in the morning. I start by checking out the appointments, and then do many different things throughout the day. I come back home at eight, eight-thirty – so it's a long day, but it's OK. And sometimes, I have other obligations, evenings, professional meetings, dinners. Then there are fashion weeks. During the fashion weeks I travel with my friends, and then I am working the whole day – from nine in the morning through the night hours. I am very busy, but it's the kind of job where you are always very busy, that's the way it works," she explains. After work hours, she likes strolling the streets of Paris trying to unwind and relax, which is fairly difficult as her thoughts immediately race back to her job. Valérie seldom uses "I" when talking about her work; it is always "we," her team. When it comes to recruiting, she looks for professionals who have a voice and ability to think "outside the box." Among the well-known members of her team are journalists with distinct style and humor, such as Sophie Fontanel and Alix Girod de l'Ain, and that contributes to the success of the brand. ELLE has a "very direct and honest voice," noted Valérie Hermann, the former CEO of Yves Saint Laurent, "It has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve."

## Women in France are Exhausted

That vision and the "womenpower" behind ELLE allowed the magazine to do things only few women's magazines have ever done – make important changes in society. Last year the magazine conducted a wide survey in many towns of France interviewing women about their opinions and feelings about the state of women in France. The questions were related to the issues of equality, relationships between men and women, sex, career and the expectations of women. "Our magazine, ELLE, did the same survey in 1970 after the events of 1968, and now, forty years later, we decided to ask exactly the same questions to see if things have changed. The results were surprising because women, on one hand, were telling about major improvements in the quality of their lives, and on the other hand, were very stressed. Women had a feeling that they were perpetually challenged to accomplish everything – a career, children, housekeeping, looks..., which is very difficult. Not many means are put in place to help women."

The results of the survey made news in France and around the world, "'Women in France are exhausted' says Valérie Toranian!" screamed the headlines. Of course ELLE published a special issue of the magazine, but Toranian and her team didn't stop there. It was obvious, that the struggle for equality launched in 1968 was still very current. Men in French society still receive preferential treatment in

"IT IS NOT UNCOMMON THAT WE SEND TEXT MESSAGES FOR 23 HOURS STRAIGHT BECAUSE WE ARE EXCITED BY A SUBJECT."

all spheres of life. They hold higher professional positions in the corporate world and in politics, and there was not much in place to help connect men with their family responsibilities. ELLE organized debates in five cities in France and on the Internet on topics such as work, relations, and the roles within the family. "We had a special meeting arranged with the Prime Minister of France to discuss these issues," tells Toranian. The findings of ELLE became the basis of the "White Paper" that ELLE submitted to the French Prime Minister Francois Fillon and Laurence Parisot, the head of MEDEF (National Council of the French Employers), the largest union of employers in France. It included 24 proposals aimed to improve women's lives. Among them were programs geared towards child care, equal pay, requirements for organizations to focus on work hour productivity versus actual presence, maternity and paternity leaves, shelters for abused women, and equality in education. "This was a major event in the life of the magazine because we made a difference, and also because people could see that it is not just a magazine, but it's a magazine linked to the history of women in this country. I think, this is a very special place that ELLE has entered," concluded Toranian. Needless to say, the special women's issue completely sold out from the newsstands.

## Natural is Beautiful

This was not the first time that ELLE made a splash in French society. In 2009, eight celebrities were photographed without makeup for the first time for three covers of ELLE. This was a milestone for the world of fashion because it showed realistic images of women, except for the fact that these particular women were gorgeous to begin with. Valérie Toranian personally persuaded supermodel Eva Herzigova, 36, Italian actress Monica Belucci, 44, and former Bond girl Sophie Marseau, 42, to appear in front of photographer Peter Lindbergh's camera. Other celebrities followed the initiative to pose realistically as opposed to the societally imposed images altered by tons of makeup and airbrushing.

We asked Valérie Toranian the reason behind the increasing trend in putting emphasis on the issues of sex and sexuality in women's magazines.

"Sexuality does not 'sell' the magazine well," she answered, "because it is a very narrow concept. Writing about sex and relationship between a man and a woman




**ELLE**
Highly regarded across all generations for its attitudes, news, fashion, beauty and style, ELLE is a magazine that reflects societal issues. It is hugely widespread, with 42 editions as well as an unrivaled web network of over 28 sites. Its publications include an interior design magazine, ELLE Decoration, with 23 editions worldwide and a culinary magazine, ELLE à Table, with five editions.

is not our main angle. We are talking more about the reality of life today. Of course, we write about couples and relationships, sexuality, love and family, psychology, and fashion and beauty. We generate a magazine that is more complete, without focusing on one aspect."

## Burka on the Cover?

Another important event in the life of the magazine took place back in 2003 when ELLE came up with a special issue dedicated to women in Afghanistan. For the first time in the history of the magazine a woman wearing a burka graced the cover. The woman was sitting by a wall with a small young girl without a veil next to her. "We decided to do this issue because at that time we were shocked and upset by the treatment of women by the Taliban government in Kabul. It seemed that at the time no one cared. We were not sure about the reaction of the public, but the issue was very well-received by our readers, which was very important, because it showed that the magazine has the capability of being engaged with women's situation globally."

## Unveiling the "Veil Law"

The legislation banning Muslim girls to wear a veil in public institutions was presented in December 2003 by then President Jacques Chirac. It explicitly forbids any visible signs of religious affiliation, in the spirit of *laïcité*, or the secularity principle. Sometimes referred to as the "Veil Law," the proposed legislation was voted into law by the French Parliament in March of 2004. It forbids the wearing of any "ostentatious" religious articles, including the Islamic veil, the Jewish kippa, and large Christian



**Valérie Toranian**
From 1983 to 1987, Valérie Toranian was a freelance journalist for women's magazines before being hired, in 1994, as head of the Beauty department of ELLE. In 1996 she became Beauty Editor and Deputy Fashion Editor before being promoted in 1998 to Editor of ELLE. In November 2000 she was named Deputy Director of ELLE. Since 2002 she has been the Director of ELLE and the author of the book *Pour en Finir avec la Femme* (2004). In December 2004, Toranian was named Vice-President and Spokesperson for the ELLE Foundation which finances projects related to the education and formation of women in France and elsewhere in the world. She has been the President of the Foundation since June 2010. Her life partner is Franz-Olivier Giesbert, a journalist and television host.

crosses. The law permits discreet signs of faith, such as small crosses, Stars of David, and hands of Fatima. In fact, there are similar laws in Muslim countries, such as Indonesia and Turkey, that ban the Islamic veil in public schools. The passing of the law ignited big protests in France on both sides - its proponents and opponents. Ironically, the law went into effect the day of our interview with Valérie Toranian. So naturally, we asked her opinion.

"The issue is very complicated. First, there was something worrying about all these increasing numbers of veils. However, I think there is a political exploitation of Islamic debate in France. Our magazine was engaged, but not with this debate. We are not focused on religion, because religion is something very private; we are focused on what these signs mean for women, and in what position they put women. So for us, a 12 years old girl that wears a veil to school and does not go to the gym is incompatible with the principle of equality of men and women, boys and girls in schools. It's been almost 10 years that we have had this debate in France, and now we think that the nature of the debate is about to change. It is very difficult, because this debate was not made to point at Muslims, or any other parts of our society. Quite the opposite, it was made with an intention to ensure equal rights for all religions. The law was not written against Islam – all religions in the past did not treat women well, and we think that we have to face these questions, standing in defense of the rights of the women, and not from religious, xenophobic, or racist standpoints. Personally, I think it was OK not to accept young girls who wear veils in class, because it creates situations in which the differences between young girls and boys are openly emphasized. ELLE represent all kinds of women – some are religious some are not, and the important thing for us is to defend the women's issues and to improve the conditions of women's life."

**ELLE'S BRAND IS AN INSTITUTION IN FRANCE, AND THE MAGAZINE STILL REMAINS MODERN, CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE**

## Cherchez la Femme

Valérie Toranian's schedule is busy beyond comprehension. In October 2010 she hosted the annual global Women's Forum entitled "Change: Make it Happen" held in Deauville, France. On May 5 of this year, Toranian and the Minister of Culture and Communication Frederic Mitterrand hosted a party for the winners of the New Talents in Fashion contest launched by the magazine at the Ministry of Culture and Communication. The magazine's online platform provided space for the young fashion designers to present their work. The readers then voted on the best designer. The winner from the eight finalists is given a studio and opportunity to present and sell her models. Whether it is a continuation of reality TV contests trend or a real shift towards democratization of fashion, the future will show. In spite of the fact that many magazines are facing challenges, ELLE continues to do very well. "The magazine is proud of its accomplishments, especially in the past year, considering the fact that we have many competitors in the market of women's and weekly news," informs Toranian. In fact, the French edition is the only weekly magazine among its monthly international editions. ELLE has a history in France where it was launched in 1945. She continues, "The success of ELLE is that it is an institution in France in terms of a brand, and the magazine still remains modern, innovative and creative. Our subscriptions and sales have tripled in four years, which is very good for us and our advertisers. On one hand, it is very close to our reader and our society, our world, how we live and how things are changing. We write about the place we have in society and the evolution of the society in general. On the other hand, it is glamorous, and it's about fashion and beauty and all things that women would like to have."

## Best of Both Worlds

Toranian's mixed heritage allows her to fit into French society, but also to develop a unique identity. "Being an Armenian was in my history, in my family life," she explains, "Something that has built me differently than the others was the way I grew up, the way I was educated. When I was very young I was close to some members of my family, particularly, my grandmother. I was facing tragic histories, like the ones my grandmother told me about the way she escaped the Genocide. These were things that were important for the construction of my personality. The fact that I am the product of mixed cultures is important too. To be an Armenian is to be like the others, but at the same time, not entirely like the others. You feel that specificity, and your identity is not conformed. It enriches you. This is something that might upset you when you are young, because you might think 'it's complicated.' But it's quite the opposite – all these difficulties to find your identity build you up and give you very big opportunities. It has given me the ability of being interested in different people, people's suffering, injustice, which is a big part of my personality." ■

# Scent for the Ages



**While most boys his age were out playing sports or causing havoc, Francis Kurkdjian was playing the piano, practicing ballet and dreaming of working in the fashion industry. Before his fashion aspirations the young Kurkdjian wanted to become a dancer or an archaeologist. He took classes and studied hard, but his dreams were crushed when he didn't win the Opera de Paris ballet contest. He then set out to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather who was a tailor.**

Text **Violet Kanian** | Photo **Nathalie Baetens**



At the age of 15 Francis Kurkdjian set aside his dream of becoming a fashion designer and pursued his new found goal of becoming a perfumer. He found it to be an artistic way of staying close to his passion for designing fashion. "There was a link between the luxurious world of Yves Saint Laurent or Christian Dior and the creation of fragrances for these great French houses," says Kurkdjian. He didn't just play around with this idea but really set out to achieve it. He finished studying perfuming at the International School for Perfumers in Versailles at the age of 25. He interned at the Givaudan perfume house, which at the time was known as Quest International, and was also taking marketing courses under a Cartier scholarship. "I met the CEO of the company that had Jean Paul Gaultier's license for his fragrance," remembers Kurkdjian. "This is how I got into the competition to create, Le Male by Jean Paul Gaultier. It was my first competition and my first win." Kurkdjian is the mastermind behind Le Male, the first perfume for men by Jean Paul Gaultier. However, not even Kurkdjian knew that 15 years later he would be working on fragrances for his very own perfume line. In 2001, Kurkdjian took the first step when he created custom-made fragrances. In 2009, at the age of 40, Kurkdjian opened Maison Francis Kurkdjian in Paris. "My pleasure and happiness to create is in my formulas, but also in the fact that I get to be the art director of my own house and share my ideas with my team first and then with our customers,"

Francis Kurkdjian is the mastermind behind Le Male, the first perfume for men by Jean Paul Gaultier. However, not even Kurkdjian knew that 15 years later he would be working on fragrances for his very own perfume line.

explains Kurkdjian. "To be involved in the design for the packaging, the logo, to have a global mind about my brand, which is a little universe, made to give some pleasure to others." Since the launch of Le Male, through which Kurkdjian has no doubt launched his career – he has worked with fashion houses and designers like Elizabeth Arden, Giorgio Armani, Narciso Rodriquez, Christian Dior and many, many others. His favorite perfume is always the one he is working on at the moment because, according to him, if you have a favorite, you may not enjoy the next one. ▸



**Francis Kurkdjian**

Francis Kurkdjian was born on May 14, 1969 in Paris, France. He takes that day off every year. Along with his fragrances, Kurkdjian has also won many awards for his creations, including "The Prix Francois Coty Perfumer" in October 200, which is like the Oscars of fragrances, *Cosmetique Magazine's* Best Perfumer of the Year in 2008, he was named "Chevalier of Arts and Letters" in July 2008, won Breakthrough Product of the Year Fine Fragrance in 2009 and *Cosmetique Magazine's* "Best Niche Mixte" perfume for his Aqua Universalis in June 2010.




Kurkdjian has taken something from each of the designers he has had the opportunity to work with.

"I learned humility from each of them. They have a vision that is unique," he says.

Kurkdjian recalls some of the memorable moments with some of the designers he enjoyed working with the most. "I have to say sharing ideas and values with Alber Elbaz or Elie Saab was a great experience. I can't forget Mr. Emanuel Ungaro. Working in his studio on Avenue Montaigne or my first meeting with Hedi Slimane," says Kurkdjian. "Not to mention my work with Rick Owens or Alexandre Vauthier, a young yet extremely talented fashion designer." Kurkdjian believes that to create a perfume one must have a little inspiration and a lot of energy. When it comes to celebrities creating their own lines, Kurkdjian doesn't have a problem with it, saying that everyone has the right to their own taste. "They do what they want for the pleasure of their fans, I assume, and their bank account as well," laughs Kurkdjian.

Although his parents were born in France and are both French nationals, Kurkdjian still recognizes his Armenian roots. His grandparents from his father's side were from Istanbul and his grandparents from his mother's side from Panderma, on the Sea of Marmara (modern Turkey). Kurkdjian laughs about the fact that growing up people had difficulty pronouncing his last name.

He says that he's been able to spell his name from the day he learned to write, and that's what's important.

Kurkdjian says his grandmother has been a central person in his life and education about his Armenian culture. "She taught me a lot about this culture and spirit," says Kurkdjian. "I know the story of my family. Why they left Turkey and decided to live in France. I know the genocide period." Kurkdjian says that he was different growing up in France because he was able to see different things from an early age. He says that he feels more like a citizen of the world. And as such, he has also visited Armenia. "Once with French President Jacques Chirac and the French delegation during his official trip to Armenia in 2006!" says Kurkdjian. "It was my first trip to Armenia." Although becoming a fashion designer was once his passion, Kurkdjian says that at the moment, he is focusing mainly on his fragrances. He says that his own house of fragrance is still quite young and there is a long way to go. Aside from launching a Crystal Edition bottle to celebrate 10 years of custom-made fragrances, Kurkdjian is always working on new scents and collaborating with artists. "I have a project with artist Yann Tomas for May 2012," he divulges. "It is a huge project that will require lots of focus." Kurkdjian is also excited about telling us his Armenian name, "Nourhan." ■

Francis Kurkdjian's favorite perfume is always the one he is working on at the moment because according to him, if you have a favorite, you may not enjoy the next one.



# Sculpting Hair to New Lights

When Sally Hershberger skyrocketed Meg Ryan's career with the famous $600 "Sally Shag," beauty school drop-outs came to a new realization – hairdressers have become the new trend pioneers. From bussing tables to styling the locks of Samuel L. Jackson and Ricki Lake – meet Naz Kupelian, an international hair artist to the stars, whose life reads like the ultimate success story.

Text **Sauline Kojababian**

With exceptional innovation, Naz Kupelian's talents have allowed him to produce hair designs for a broad range of clients, runways, and celebrities. Moving to the United States from Beirut, Lebanon at the mere age of 18, Naz Kupelian first had dreams of pursuing a career in medicine. His intent was short-lived due to financial obstacles. This limitation helped him sharpen his artistic eye, a gift that ultimately led to a new passion – hairstyling.

As he waits for his luggage at the airport due to a delayed flight, he tells me "I was working as a bartender in Boston, and cutting hair on the side as a hobby. When I realized that I was really good at it, and could make a living, I started working at a real salon in Lexington, Massachusetts." What started off as a way of making ends meet, unraveled itself into a newfound hidden talent for Naz. As he made his way through beauty school, Naz became acquainted with beauty veterans Irvine and Louise Rusk of RUSK(r) professional hair care products. Now, a long time member and master educator for the influential salon brand, Naz has helped launch a national advertising campaign with former Access Hollywood host, Nancy O'Dell.

As a media spokesperson for the campaign, Naz Kupelian offers tips and insider tricks for the product line. Leading the RUSK creative team of stylists and designers at hair conventions, Kupelian has also been busy globetrotting, traveling to France, Italy, and London teaching and inspiring others. "After I went to my first hair show through RUSK, I was hooked. I knew I wanted to be an educator and I knew I could be good at it. Since then I have never looked back. I have been with the company almost 10 years and have traveled the world bringing all my experience and knowledge back to my salon," he says. Regularly caught in the limelight with guest appearances on the TV Guide Network, beautifying celebrities at the Sundance Film Festival, and styling television personalities at the New England Emmy Awards, Naz continues to expand his horizons far beyond the salon swivel chair.



"I always say, the day a hairdresser feels they know it all, it is time for them to quit because the business is constantly changing and we have to change with it."



As working for others grew mundane, Naz became seemingly ready to branch out on his own. With high-end salons being abundant in urban cities like New York and Los Angeles, Naz Kupelian Salon in historic Lexington



continues to be one of the most cutting-edge salons in the nation. It even went as far as being awarded "Best Suburban Salon 2010" by *The Improper Bostonian*. With its close proximity to the lively city of Boston, Kupelian shares a yawning connection with the area. "When I came from Lebanon, I first stayed in New Jersey with my sister but I didn't like it. I took a trip to Boston to visit a friend of mine and I just fell in love. Boston is such an old city with an English feel. Although the traffic was hard getting used to, I ended up staying," he laughs.

Appointments with Naz are hard to come by. With scores of hairstylists to choose from, he sets himself apart with a sincere trait – honesty. "I believe in

what I do, and I think stylists should be seen as experts in their craft. I enjoy making clients happy. Hairdressers can truly change lives because if you give a client a great look with great color, it makes the difference. You are constantly touching people. The hair industry, in my opinion, is one of the only industries that have an emotional effect on people other than doctors," he explains. Just this year he launched the Naz Kupelian Academy intended for stylists working on improving their skills and techniques.

At the academy, located inside his salon, hairdressers follow Kupelian's motivational direction in a two-day workshop. Styling hair is not the same across the board, "There are a few different types of hairdressers: you have hairdressers that go into work and do the same thing everyday. Next, you have technical hairdressers, who work strictly by the book. Finally, you have technical and creative ones. One must be creative! It's not just following trends…you have to form them and constantly keep going and move forward," he says in an amusing manner. Being a celebrity stylist isn't all about glamour all the time.

As much as Kupelian takes pleasure in styling Hollywood's leading ladies, giving back to charity is at the top of his priority list. "Every human being should give back; it is selfish not to give. I had a daughter at Children's Hospital – charity work is very significant to me. We just need to give back, nothing more," he says.

Last October, his entire team spearheaded hair and makeup for "The Catwalk for a Cure" fashion show benefiting the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Naz is also on a mission to endorse children's hospitals worldwide by consecutively participating in the heartfelt HAIRraising program, created by renowned stylist John Frieda. Benefiting Boston's Children's Hospital, Kupelian's salon matches every dollar raised and encourages clients to contribute a small amount at the end of their consultation.

"This is a great opportunity for the salon community to come together in support of a facility that is very close to my heart. It is an honor to be part of a charity program that is a collaboration of some of the most

> "Fashion shows are great and the models are beautiful. You can do anything and they always end up gorgeous. I get satisfaction working on real people. When approached, I never say no, but deep inside, I like to change the average person."






↑ Naz Kupelian with acclaimed actor Samuel L. Jackson.

← Naz doing what he does best, styling on the RUSK stage.

**Naz Kupelian**
**Reel of notable celebrities**
▸ Samuel L. Jackson
▸ Ricki Lake
▸ Nancy O'Dell of
*Entertainment Tonight*
▸ Justin Bartha of
*The Hangover.*
▸ Josh Radnor of
*How I Met Your Mother*
▸ Malin Ackerman of
*The Proposal*
▸ Tom Bergeron of
*Dancing with the Stars*
▸ Ashlan Gorse of
the E! Channel.







talented artists in the beauty industry." Serving as a leading authority in the hair industry, Kupelian can forecast trends one year in advance.
According to his predictions, the current hair trend, Ombre (coloring technique accomplished with darker roots and lighter tips), is here to stay. "I see the Ombre technique being taken to the next level with variations and lots of flashes of color. Incorporating beautiful bursts of color on very natural looking highlights."
For longer hair, imagine a lot of layers with a European flare, a "modern Farrah Fawcett" look, as he likes to call it. For shorter hair, the bob is getting more angular with longer layers in the front and shorter in the back. With witty self-assurance, Kupelian stops mid-conversation and, as a side note adds, "I have to say, we came up with these trends and no one was showing them except us. All of a sudden, at one of the biggest hair conventions in Orlando, I started seeing every other company going in our direction. I am flattered by this. I always set the trend when it comes to haircutting."
When forecasting trends, Naz gathers a lot of his inspiration from the younger generation. "I get a lot of style stimulation from kids. The fashion industry clearly correlates with the beauty industry. I pay attention to what kids are wearing and how they style their hair when I am traveling – in every country the fashion is so diverse, but that's how you get a better grasp of trends," he explains.
Measured as a highly accomplished individual in the business, Kupelian continues to push the boundaries while maintaining his unsurpassed reputation for his work.
"I just love what I do. I am one of those really lucky people that go to work every day and I am happy," Kupelian says with laughter.
Although trends and people's tastes are continuously shifting, one thing will always remain the same: everyone needs a good hairstylist and a cut that reflects who they are. ■

# Here Comes the Bride

As I walk into an extension of her enchanting world, a pretty girl with a big smile checks me in. I tour the store and patiently wait to meet the woman behind some of the most talked about wedding and evening couture gowns in mainstream media. Out comes artsy-intellectual Armine Ohanessian, owner and designer of R-Mine, wearing a royal blue top with yellow-tip nails to match. As she studies me carefully, "petite you are" she says and continues with, "I can tell you have a simplistic style, "I see you in this one," she says, pointing out a beautiful white dress with hints of powder blue that virtually screamed my taste. Thus began my two-hour fashion crazed interview.

Text **Sauline Kojababian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan, Tigran Tovmasyan**

## R-Mine

In bold red letters, her shop sign, "R-Mine" decorates the busy street of Ventura Boulevard. Funny enough, Michael Jackson wrote "Billie Jean" while cruising down this very street. Located in Studio City, one of the most affluent cities in Los Angeles, R-Mine has grand curb appeal. Tall glass doors invite shoppers in to a modern decor wonderland. "When a bride-to-be walks into R-Mine, I want her to automatically feel hip and different. I have my daughter's art hanging from the walls, which shows my creative side and that there is an artist beyond a store setting. I want to be chic, unusual, and edgy," she explains. Inside, mirrored closets play with the colors of the walls which are painted a shade lighter than Tiffany Blue. Red chairs accent an avant-garde red chandelier that hangs from the ceiling. "Every bridal store has crystal chandeliers, the one I have – I found in my neighbor's trash can. It was all rusty and my neighbor mentioned that it would be so much work to bring back to life, but I took it home anyway and painted it red. I wanted red because I am such a color freak. The chandelier completely changed the image of the store," she says. One of a kind pieces drape across the store with a variety to satisfy any woman's taste. Brides that work with Armine and her staff experience a completely unconventional take on wedding dress shopping. Instead of cataloging through countless dress options that make one's head spin, Armine believes in a slightly different approach. "If a bride doesn't see something she likes in the store, I can create it. No need to try fifty thousand dresses – trust me and believe in my work," she says. With a keen judge of personality, she can precisely recommend what kind of dress will suit her clients.

## Armine

Some people just have the magic touch, whatever they envision works out beautifully. This is indeed the case with Armine; she is as interesting and unpredictable as her characteristically bold glasses. With an education in arts and fashion design, this multi-faceted designer does it all: she paints, she travels, she buys fine art and, of course, she creates. "I was born to see color," she says, "I look at a dress as a palette of paint or a canvas."

Graduating from the Fine Art University in Yerevan, Armenia and continuing her education at the Los Angeles based Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising proved more difficult than one would think. "It was not suggested for me to be an artist because it wasn't a steady job. Being a scientist's daughter, I did try to choose something more practical. For a while



"I am not a tuxedo kind of girl, I prefer men to dress in suits."



I attended medical school, but my imaginative side took over and pulled me back in," she explains.
Working in fashion can be as glamorous as a 1940s Hollywood party but, at times, can have its stressful downfalls. In this dwindling economy, Armine manages to stay afloat by sticking to one motto: tuck away the ego. "I think every business is cutthroat – you just have to be the best at what you do and be able to do everything yourself. I don't take shame in saying I do a lot of my own work."

## The R-Mine Bride

The perfect wedding atmosphere starts with a stunning bride. The sound of the organ plays, guests turn as sunlight illuminates a beautiful figure walking down the aisle revealing a smile behind her bouquet. The groom stares with awe. Aside from picking out the ring, Armine makes these dramatized movie scene clichés a reality for her brides. From one-on-one fittings to personal calls from Armine herself, the R-Mine bride wants an experience to remember when it comes to her wedding dress. Women who come to Armine have a classic yet glamorous touch to them. "An R-Mine bride has a strong personality. She is exceptionally unique, sophisticated, and alluring. She chooses R-Mine simply because she wants a one of a kind dress tailored just for her," she says.
Wedding planning can be stressful for brides. Armine has had her share of "Bridezillas" throughout the years. "I try to give as much of myself as I can, but they are going to be frazzled regardless. Sometimes they scream and yell, but half an hour later, I get a phone call with a dozen apologies. It always ends up working out at the end," she explains.

## Distinctively R-Mine

Not too long ago, Armine carried a wide selection of couture designs by Rivini, Marchesa, Kenneth Pool, and Pronovias. "I wanted to take the store to another level. The designers I carried, I loved all of them, but what I bring to the table is something very different. Even when I did carry other designers, I created my own on the side. I also don't believe in designing a collection for every season or every six months –every two weeks, I have something new," she says. The magic starts in the design room. Armine and her staff sew each bead and meticulously attach each button by hand to create the ultimate customized dress for her clientele. Her touch is especially unique: modern but always rational, artistic, but never over the top. "I love Chanel. I am a Jean Paul Gaultier and Alexander McQueen kind of girl. I love crazy fashion," she laughs as we discuss our favorite designers.
Every designer has their strong point, for Armine it is her understanding of fabrics. Having worked for International Silks and Woolens, the largest fabric distributor in Los Angeles, Armine can easily identify a fabric's composition worn on the runway from her second row seat. "I can't do it all the time because it's very expensive, but I love working with gazar. I also love handmade lace – I use yards of lace from Italy made by skilled Italian women. I like fabrics with movement and texture," she explains.
Continuously creating, Armine also designs hair accessories and has a ready-to-wear collection under wraps. As a business woman, she wants to organically grow the R-Mine line into three or four



**Armine Ohanessian**
**Custom Gowns by R-Mine**
▸ Kendra Wilkinson
(Playmate, *The Girls Next Door*)
▸ Katherine McPhee
(Singer, American Idol)
▸ America Olivo
(Actress, *Transformers*)
▸ **Press** *OK!, Angeleno,Towne & Country Weddings, US Weekly, In Touch, In Style Weddings, Los Angeles Times Magazine, People*





"If you want to be different, let me dress you, and you will be satisfied."

fashion boutiques. A vast expansion is not on her priority list. "I see the brand going further. I have a vision in a lot of things – I want to do everything," she laughs. Naturally, a woman who travels the world attending countless couture runway shows can be classified as a trend expert. According to Armine, the modern bride wants more color. Green, pink, blue, and even black is incorporated into Armine's latest designs. The current R-Mine custom collection has a lot of assortment from taffeta ball gowns to flirty knee lengths with feather accents. She caters to the taste of each individual client. Every bride wants what they dreamed about as a little girl. As much as Armine follows trends, her success comes from listening to her clients and bringing them one step closer to their fairytale wedding. ■

# Most Influential Fashion Designers

Fashion design is generally considered to have started in the 19th century when Charles Frederick Worth put his label onto the clothes that he created. Before the former draper set up his *maison couture* – fashion house in Paris, clothing design and creation was handled by anonymous seamstresses. Nowadays it's not that easy to answer the question, "What is fashion?" Fashion is an art, a religion, a feeling...Though fashion can be considered an individual statement of expression for each of us, there is a unique world formed by designers whose distinct styles even unconsciously influence the way people dress. Here is our list of the 10 most influential fashion designers who revolutionized the fashion industry, set trends that have withstood the test of time and have had a lasting impact on the fashion world.



**Coco Chanel (1883 - 1971)**
Chanel was a French fashion designer destined to liberate women from the constraints of corsets and other uncomfortable garments. She held the title of chief designer from 1909 until her death in 1971. Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel heralded new designs and revolutionized the fashion industry by going "back to basics," incorporating elegance, class, and originality. The first true "Chanel suit" was produced in 1925; Coco used chains to weigh down the fabric, favored ornamentation such as ribbons, buttons, and ropes of pearls. The fashion icon helped to popularize the bob hairstyle, the little black dress, and the use of jersey knit for women's clothing. She elevated the status of both costume jewelry and knitwear.

**Giorgio Armani (1936 - )**
In the wake of the Disco era, Giorgio Armani's unique vision helped define Italian fashion-luxury as easy to wear, confirming Milan's status as second only to Paris as the center of international fashion. Giorgio Armani produced his first collection for women in 1975 with a line that was dynamic, urban, understated and androgynous in inspiration. Armani offered a restrained style that greatly appealed to the increasing population of women who now had access to the world of employment. Armani is best known for revolutionizing fashion with his unstructured jacket in the 80s, which feature a softer shoulder and a longer line. After 30 years of running his own label, Emporio Armani, the Italian designer now controls over a stable of collections, including his signature Giorgio Armani line, Armani Collezioni, AJ and A/X Armani Exchange among others.





**Christian Dior (1905 - 1957)**
In 1947, Dior's collection "Corolle" was coined the "New Look" by the Editor-in-Chief of *Harper's Bazaar*. It revolutionized women's dress and reestablished Paris as the center of the fashion world. The collection contained dresses with tiny waists, majestic busts, and full skirts swelling out beneath a small frame. The extravagant use of fabric and the feminine elegance of the designs appealed greatly to a post-war clientele and ensured Dior's rise to fame. He is quoted as saying "I have designed flower women." Dior's look employed fabrics lined predominantly with percale, boned; bustier-style bodices, hip padding, wasp-waisted corsets and petticoats that made his dresses flare out endlessly.



**Gianni Versace (1946-1997)**
Gianni Versace's importance to the history of fashion lies mainly in his having carried the seduction of the unusual to extremes. He did so by bravely introducing stereotypes of vulgarity into the world of haute bourgeoisie – plunging necklines and miniskirts, sheath dresses and gaudy accessories – and by using apparently improbable combinations of fabrics, colors and prints. Throughout the 1980s, Versace's style created a new fashion-media relationship, helping to establish an icon of lifestyle and reinforcing the importance of clothing in the social imagination. Asymmetrical cuts, layered draping, optical designs, metallic mesh, and the use of studs and lace are some of Versace's aesthetic "inventions" that have become his trademark. He was also one of the first designers who completely reinvented certain materials, which led him to the exploration of previously unthinkable combinations such as leather and silk, jute and gold.



**Ralph Lauren (1939 - )**
American fashion designer Ralph Lauren, best known for his Polo collection, became the epitome of classic fashion in the mid-70s. Ralph Lauren's signature polo shirts, with their universal polo pony and rider, became fashionable items for everyone: his aristocratic style at prices the average American could afford created a sensation. Ralph Lauren released Polo's famous short sleeve mesh shirt with the Polo logo in 1972. It came out in 24 colors and soon became a classic. The number one of American ready-to-wear, Lauren was equally successful with his sportswear and jeans, which allowed him to reach the widest possible range of social classes and age groups. He first gained notoriety with his wide ties, which were often made of unusual fabrics, and soon the word spread about Lauren's somewhat decadent personal style.



**Vivienne Westwood (1941 – )**
British designer Vivienne Westwood is the woman responsible for bringing punk fashion to the public. During the 1970s Westwood began designing outlandish garments using lots of leather and skin-tight materials, safety pins, chains, spiked dog collars and other nontraditional fashion elements. Her rebellious, grunge collections became popular among punk rock musicians and the youth and has retained its popularity ever since. Westwood truly broke the mold when she introduced modern punk into everyday street wear, and continues to do so today with shocking, cutting-edge designs for women and men.

**Alexander McQueen (1969 - 2010)**
British fashion designer and couturier Lee Alexander McQueen was an iconic, imaginative and inspirational fashion designer whose work turned heads and won hearts all over the world. He sought not only to dress the women of the world as the preceding titans of ready-to-wear, but to inspire them to epic artistic proportion, to bust fashion out of its commercial confines and reinvent its role in contemporary society. McQueen's early runway collections developed his reputation for controversy and shock tactics with trousers aptly named "bumsters" and a collection entitled "Highland Rape." It spawned a trend in low rise jeans, earning the title "l'enfant terrible" and "the hooligan of English fashion."





**Donna Karan (1948 - )**
Confident, streamlined and quietly luxurious, Donna Karan's designs are the epitome of late 20th century urban style. Since her debut in 1985, Karan's signature women's wear collections have demonstrated the soft, sculptural awareness of the female form through tailored city wear. Karan became well-known for her "Essentials" line, initially offering seven easy pieces which could all be mixed and matched to create a fully integrated wardrobe. In 1988, "The Queen Of Seventh Avenue" extended her women's "Donna Karan New York" line with a less expensive one for younger women called DKNY.

**Véronique Nichanian (1954 - )**
One of the few women to design collections for men, Véronique Nichanian enjoys the technical aspects of fashion and is passionate about details, exquisite materials, and colors. Nichanian joined French luxury brand Hermès as Artistic Director of men's ready-to-wear in January 1988. Later that year, her first collection at Hermès earned her the City of Paris Grand Prix of Creative Art. Prior to Hermès, Nichanian worked with Italian couturier Cerruti for 12 years after graduating from the Ecole de la Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture in 1976, eventually becoming co-manager of the men's collections.

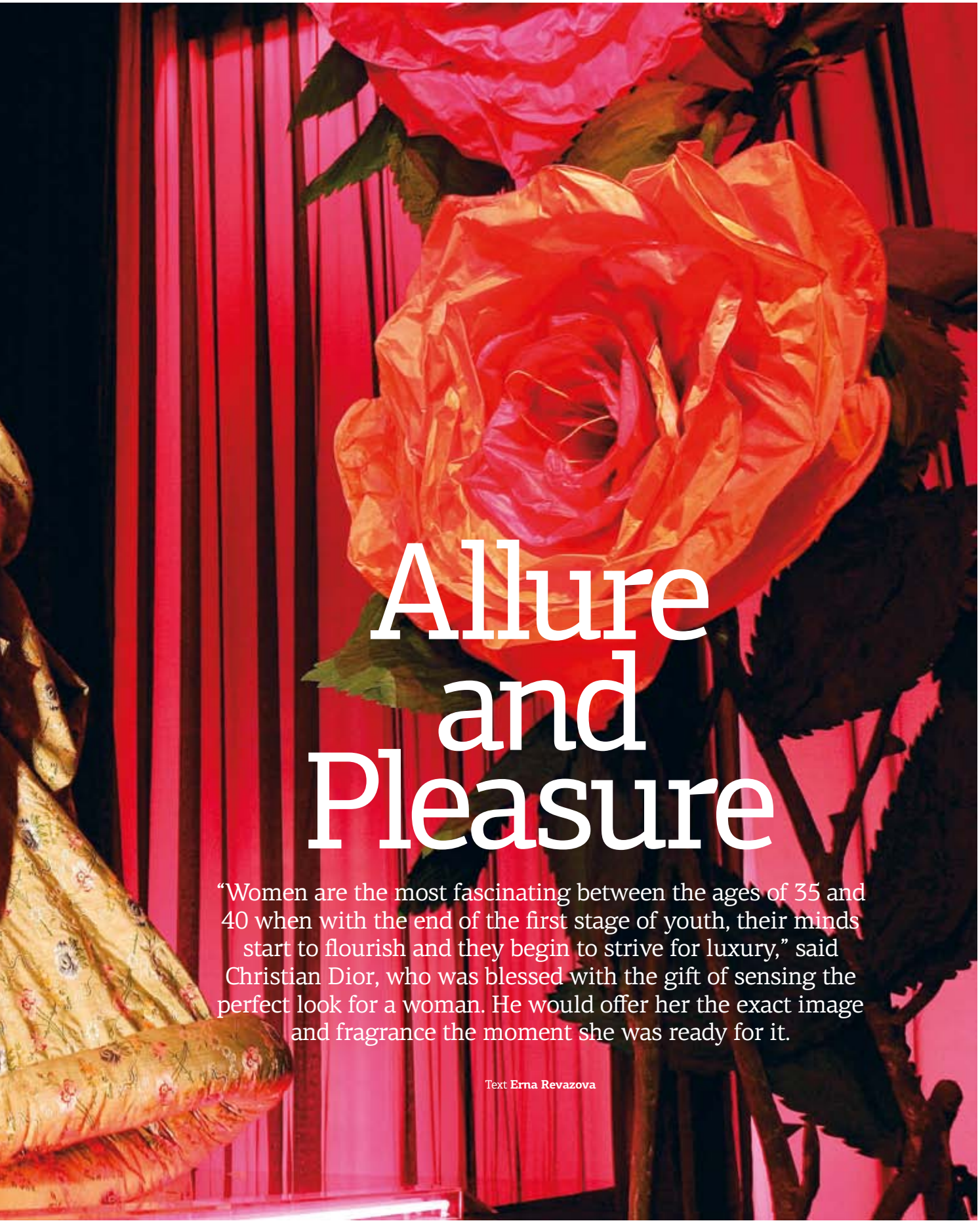





**Alain Manoukian (1949 - )**
French-Armenian designer Alain Manoukian opened his own company in 1972, in the town of Colmar, based on his wife Danielle's sweater designs. France's Groupe Manoukian grew rapidly becoming a leading designer, distributor, and retailer of ready-to-wear fashions, with an emphasis on knitwear. The company developed a full line of women's fashions, targeting the 30 to 40 year old, mid-priced segment. By the early 80s, Manoukian had expanded throughout much of France, opening its own stores as well as developing a 400-strong distribution network of franchises. In 2002, the company launched two new clothing lines. The first, Manoukian Collection, targeted the high-end customers, the 40- to 55 year-old women's market, and the second, Séda Manoukian, targeted the younger 20- to 30 year-old women's market.

**The traditional demarcation line of fashion - Paris, Milan, London and New York - is changing its original boundaries. Humanity is too rich, heterogeneous, multicultural and dynamic to focus its attention exclusively on these four cities as the neuralgic centers of fashion. People are increasingly paying attention to designers coming out of different parts of the world, ones that promise to expland the panorama of international fashion in the years ahead.**





# Allure and Pleasure

"Women are the most fascinating between the ages of 35 and 40 when with the end of the first stage of youth, their minds start to flourish and they begin to strive for luxury," said Christian Dior, who was blessed with the gift of sensing the perfect look for a woman. He would offer her the exact image and fragrance the moment she was ready for it.

Text **Erna Revazova**

Corbis

There is not a single person in the world who isn't familiar with the name of the great designer and world legend of haute couture, Christian Dior, the man who "was called upon by God to dress the angels."

## The Birth of a Legend

Christian Dior was born in the small resort town of Granville, Normandy on January 21, 1905. He grew up in a prosperous family with ancestry dating back to 1541 – an uninterrupted line of Norman farmers. His father, Moris Dior, who had inherited the strong peasant and business streak, managed a flourishing company that produced fertilizer. His mother, Madlen Dior, adored beautiful garments and luxury like any wife of a prosperous man, and Christian deified her his entire life. It was Madlen who created the elegant lifestyle of the Dior family, inculcating in the future fashion trendsetter the taste for comfort and delicacy. Soon after Christian was born, Moris and Madlen Dior purchased a lovely house on top of a cliff overlooking the strait – Villa Les Rhumbs. Madlen kept her eye on maintaining good manners and perfect order in the house and spent time nursing her small garden – Christian's favorite spot. Meanwhile, the young virtuoso, locked up with the seamstress in the room on the second floor, was making carnival costumes for family and friends. His cloudless childhood was clouded only once, when at the Granville fair he was told by a fortune-teller that "You will be very, very poor, then, however, you will regain your wealth thanks to women." Perhaps it was thanks to that strange prophecy that the pursuit of making women wonderful eventually turned into his lifetime passion. But he was far from achieving, his goal because Christian had to obey his parents will and, instead of entering the Academy of Fine Arts that he so longed for, he went to the School of Political Science. His parents wanted him to be a diplomat, not an artist – let alone a tailor. However, Christian wasn't able to graduate as he failed his finals, which isn't suprising because he preferred to spend his time at vernissage, fashion shows and concerts instead of listening to boring lectures about politics. Although he did acquire enough general knowledge to diplomatically convince his parents to compromise. They gave their son (together with his friend Jacques Bonjean) permission to open a gallery on the condition that the name Dior was not mentioned at the exhibition.

The gallery of modern art was doing quite well, Matisse, Picasso, Christian Berard, Chelishev, Utrillo, Fernand Legerd, Jean Hugo were all willingly exhibiting their works there. Soon the overindulged Parisian Bohemia acknowledged Dior. And this is when the Gypsy's mysterious prediction began to come true – misery rained on the Dior family. Christian's brother would be placed into a mental hospital, his mother would die of a post-surgery blood infection, his father's company would go bankrupt in the global financial crisis, and Villa Les Rhumbs, together with Christian's favorite garden, would be lost in bankruptcy.



↑ Christian was the second child born into a large and wealthy family.

Upon his return from Soviet Russia, Christian learned that the crash of the stock market had affected his business as well since people were no longer buying paintings. He had to make a living by working odd jobs. From 1935 to 1938, Christian sold sketches of dresses and hats to the fashion houses of Paris and drew illustrations for the fashion section of *Figaro* magazine. Then the first real success finally came when *Vogue* magazine bought his drawings for 120 francs. Soon, Christian was noticed by Parisian designer Robert Piguet who made Christian his assistant (Christian made sketches for three collections of the fashion houses of Piguet).

In the beginning of WWII, Christian was drafted into the army and, after the Germans surrendered, he left Paris and moved to Provence together with his father and sister.

Designer Lucien Lelong was the one to convince Christian to return and soon Dior's sketches were being bought by the famous fashion houses: Nina Ricci, Rosa Valua, Schiaparelli.





## New Look

Dior was 41 years old when it dawned on him to open "a small and modest fashion house for truly elegant, chosen women." The cotton-fabric magnate Marcel Brussac gave him an offer to revive one of the impoverished fashion houses that he had bought. After Christian declared that he wasn't good at "reanimating corpses," the magnate invested 60 million francs in Dior's undertaking and provided him complete freedom. "Being one's own master, in my particular case, had a lot less to do with enjoying the freedom to do as I pleased; but it presupposed commitment to my most persistent goal – to succeed at any cost," Dior later recollected. And succeed he did.

Enormous work was carried out in the first seven months. The very first collection called "Bud" was presented to postwar Paris on February 12, 1947. It was unreal, but suddenly spring came to the frosty city. It seemed as though the harsh years of war with its one and only "fashionable" style of a sexy woman-soldier never existed. Paris was thirsty for beauty and elegance, and Dior created both. Graceful models floated along the podium and the elegant public was stunned by the audacity and folly of the new style. Dior offered luxury, playfulness and an underscored romanticism. The name the designer gave to his collection of 90 dresses: Corolle Line. "New Look," stated the American *Harper's Bazaar* editor Carmel Snow. That was how she characterized the amazingly feminine silhouette incarnated in the model called "Bar" – reflection of Belle Epoque style – with a slim waist and mid-calf skirt. This is how Dior explained the success of his spring-summer collection: "We were gradually stepping away from wartime. I wanted to draw a flower woman, soft, sloping shoulders, generous bust, a slim waist, like a vine, and a wide skirt like a corolla." That was all that women in postwar Europe wanted.

↑ Villa Les Rhumbs where the future fashion trendsetter spent his childhood.

Rumors about the collection's overwhelming success crossed the ocean and reached the US. In Dallas, Dior won the prestigious "Neiman Marcus Award," an "Oscar" in the field of design. That same year, with financial support from his childhood friend Serge Heftler Louiche, who previously had worked with Koti, Dior founded Parfums Christian Dior and launched his first haute couture fragrance.

Perfume is the "unsurpassed tone of a woman's individuality, the finishing touch of her image." The first "finishing touch," MISS DIOR, enchanted all clients of the Fashion house immediately. Evening Provence was enclosed in the small baccarat crystal amphora, "pierced with the lights of the glowworms, where the verdure of jasmine calls up the melodies of the night and the earth." Only 200 women became the lucky owners of this perfume. "I created this fragrance to dress every woman in the wave of desires and to see how a costume is born out of a flask," confessed the couturier. ▸




**Makeup by Dior**

The first products in the line of makeup by Dior were lipsticks launched in 1955 under the slogan "Now Dior also dresses your smile!"

In 1961, nail polishes matching the color of the lipsticks were introduced for the first time.

In 1969, the Dior company became the first house of fashion to launch a full line of makeup.

For the fall collection of 1982 they invented the "Moon Snow" pallet consisting of four eye-shadows: a pearly white in pink, blue, green and gold, that would change its tone according to the intensity of the light.

The fall look of 1984 was marked with the introduction of the blue (electric) mascara that remained a bestselling product for years.

In 1997, the House of Dior once again introduced a mascara...but for hair.

One of the notable masterpieces of the House of Dior was the lipstick Rouge Dior "Absolute femininity," created in 2006 and presented by Monica Bellucci.

## The Owner of the Beauty Empire

In less than five years Dior created a fashion empire with branches extending all over the world. The business streak of the Diors helped him sense that there were immense opportunities within the American market. The American agency of the House of Dior was founded in 1948, and twice a year special collections were created specifically for this branch which took into consideration all the wishes of the American public. In 1949, he invented licensing as he began to sell rights to the Dior brand's image. The licensees were obliged to either work in his style or simply copy Dior's models.

New Look had a staggering success in Great Britain as well. The first presentation of Dior's collection in England took place in 1947, in Hotel Savoy, followed by the private presentation for the Queen and her family. Spellbound princesses became the Parisian couturier's avid fans. A lavish dress made of silk organza with gold and pearl embroidery was created for Princess Margaret and became the "jewel" of the Christian Dior VIP collection.

In a couple of years, House of Dior gained more than 25,000 clients, including the upper class of Paris and celebrities such as Marlene Dietrich, Liz Taylor, Ava Gardner (in the 1950s she held the unofficial title of the most beautiful woman in the world), Margot Fonteyn (English prima ballerina), and the Duchess of Windsor.

Many prominent designers of the 20th century started their creative path under the roof of the House of Dior. Pierre Cardin had worked three years with Christian Dior and was one of the very first employees of the fashion house. In 1953 a young Yves Saint Laurent joined the firm. He would become the leading designer of the House of Dior after Christian Dior's sudden death on October 24, 1957 from a heart attack. In 1960, when Saint Laurent was drafted into the army, Mark Bolan substituted for him. And from 1989 the House of Dior was headed by Gianfranco Ferre. In October of 1996, the graduate of the famous British St. Martin's College, John Galliano, was appointed head designer of the House of Dior. The eccentric new couturier was noted for skillfully combining modern extravagance and freedom of style. However, 15 years after his rise to the throne of the legendary fashion house, John Galliano was fired from the House of Dior in March 2011 for making anti-Semitic remarks.

The collection presented at the Christian Dior fall 2011 show turned out to be Galliano's last contribution to the House of Dior. The fashion house decided to end the show by introducing the large army of seamstresses and pattern-makers, who walked onto the stage in their shiny, white work coats instead of Galliano. The art of the House of Dior which provides women with a chance to experience "the joy of seduction," – the Dior show – must go on! ■



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↑ The style offered by the House of Dior can be characterized as "lavish freedom."

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# Fashions of the East and West

In the U.S. the obvious distinction between East and West is geography, where the west is known for their laid back populous and great weather while the east is considered a "blue collared" society. For Armenians, the difference is dialect, culture, lifestyle and fashion. Ruth Thomasian, the founder of Project SAVE Archives, dug through the library of over 30,000 pictures to compare the wear of Armenians.



Project SAVE Archives



Project SAVE Archives

## Abraham & Zarouhi, Marash, 1909

Abraham and Zarouhi Der Bedrosian Koutoujian pose in the fashion typical of the upper-class bride and groom in Marash. He, clutching his worry beads, looks very ethnic in his wool, low-crotched pants, and lace-embellished bolero jacket. He is seated like a king in charge of his destiny. She, handkerchief in hand, stands tall and stately like a queen in her crushed silk-velvet, European-styled gown. Around her neck is her dowry, consisting of gold Ottoman coins and a crown of fresh daisies on her Victorian hairdo. During the Genocide, their two children would die, and they would be separated for four years. In 1923, the International Red Cross miraculously reunited them in the US Their second set of children, three sons and a daughter, are recognized today in Boston for their public and community services.

## Donabed & Zaroohy, Rhode Island, 1909

The couple in the above photo, Zaroohy and Donabed Kazanjian, were from Central Falls, Rhode Island. They are dressed in the current Western European fashion of the day – a white dress for her and a suit and overcoat for him. Both costumes were inspired by Queen Victoria's wedding to Prince Albert in the famous white dress that changed Western wedding traditions.

This vintage photograph itself has a handwritten inscription on the back in Armenian:

"To my uncles, Bedros and Boghos Aloujian. We present to you so you remember us always. Let this be a true remembrance of heart-felt feelings, pure and honest.

Yours, A. Kazanjian. 1909 February 16. Central Falls."

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# An International Legend

"I have the guts to do anything," Charles Aznavour once said during one of our interviews. "I have always had the hunger of succeeding, of achieving something...and in that way, I'm a monster." And that has been the motto of his extraordinary and successful life and career. He has sold over 100 million albums, composed close to a thousand songs, and appeared in 60 films. In 1998, Aznavour was named "Entertainer of the Century" by CNN. And now at the age of 87, he's still wowing the world with his talent and charisma.

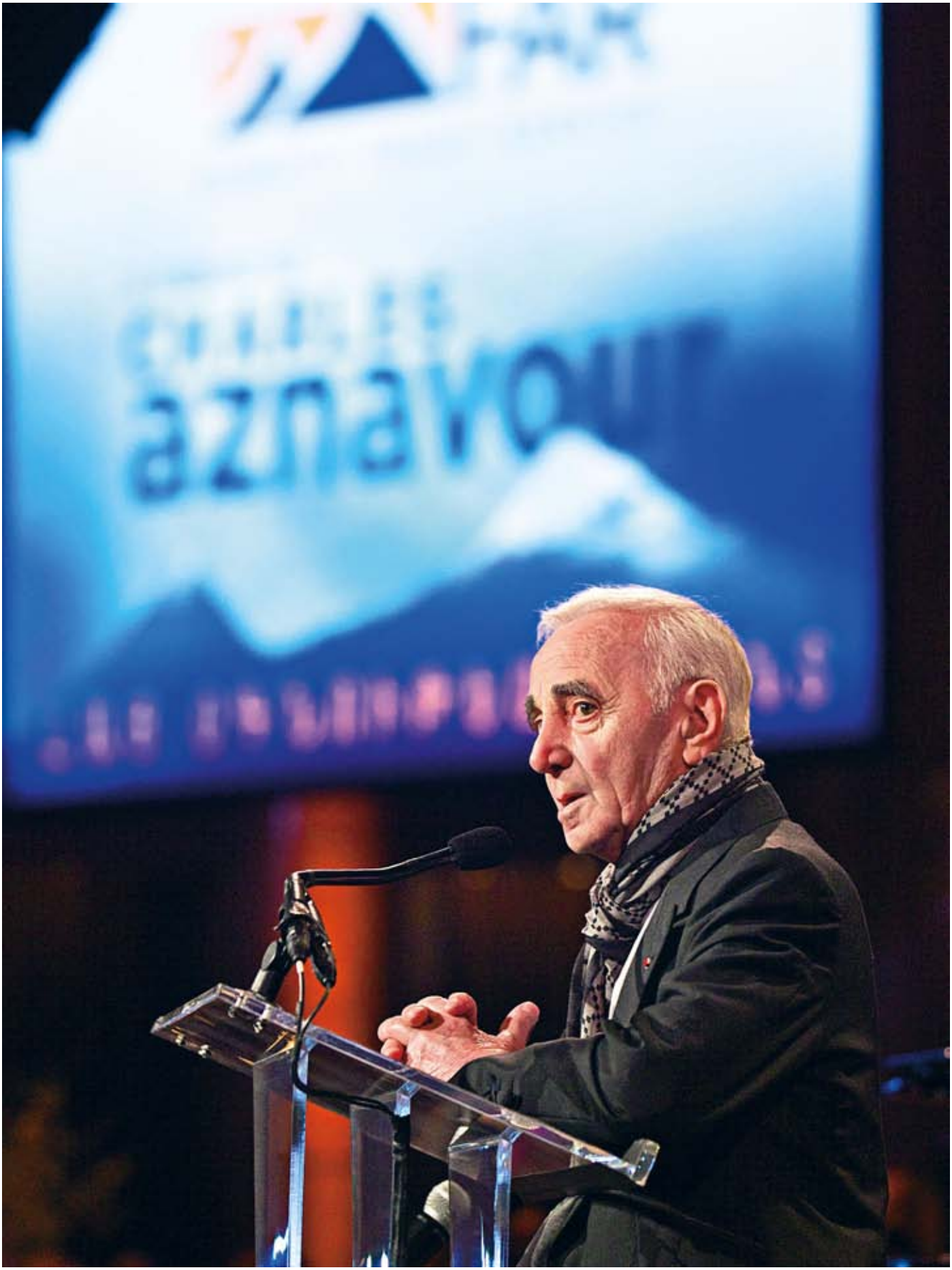
Interview by **Florence Avakian** | Photos **Edmond Terakopian**

"Thank you for honoring me, and thank you for our country. It is moving to be honored by your own community," stated Charles Aznavour, simply but poignantly, at the gala tribute accorded him by more than 600 attendees at New York's elegant Wall Street Cipriani on Friday evening, May 20, 2011. The legendary singer-songwriter, humanitarian and diplomat (Armenia's Ambassador to Switzerland, and Armenia's permanent delegate to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland), nattily dressed in a dark suit and silk scarf, remarked after the event that it was the best tribute ever conferred upon him.

Organized by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), the lavish banquet was also in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Armenian Republic's independence. Proceeds from the evening were marked for the Vanadzor Old Age Home, created by Aznavour and his long-time manager Levon Sayan, Aznavour Pour L'Arménie, right after the disastrous 1988 earthquake. For the past decade, the Home's operations have been shepherded by FAR, with generous contributions by the Kevork and Sirvart Karamanuk Foundation.

Attending the evening's festivities were a host of well known names, including singer Liza Minnelli who introduced him, actor Eric Bogosian, who was Master of Ceremonies, Armenia's Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, who was the keynote speaker, and Primate of the Eastern Diocese Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, who presented him with a crystal plaque.

Highlights of the evening included a film showing heartwarming episodes of his life, and performances of several of his world famous songs, including the international favorite, "Pour Toi, L'Armenie," recorded after the Armenian earthquake with dozens of his well known artist friends. Also paying homage to her father was singer Seda Aznavour who performed a heartfelt rendition of "Voch Mi Dzaghig" (Not One Flower), dedicated to the Aznavour family's love for Armenian culture. ▸


aznavour



During Aznavour's three-day stay in New York, I had the opportunity to conduct an exclusive interview lasting more than an hour with the 87 year-old legend. It was the sixth lengthy interview that I have had with him over the past several years. He has always answered wisely, wittily, and above all honestly, holding nothing back.

As I entered his New York hotel suite, he and his manager of 45 years, Levon Sayan, warmly greeted me. "*Eench bes es*," (How are you?), Aznavour asked with a charming smile. "*Indz hishoom ek*?" (Do you remember me?), I asked. "*Anshoosht*" (Of course), he answered, ushering me to a seat with a jaunty step. He was relaxed and smartly dressed in a striped open shirt, black trousers, and colorful suspenders which he pointed out with a wink. His most outstanding feature is his deep, penetrating, expressive eyes. "You are looking wonderful as always," I said, to which he answered, "I'm trying."

**Mr. Aznavour, as you look over this remarkable artistic life that you have had, what have been your greatest influences?**

When you have it, you have it. You can't change, you can't forget, you can't hide it. I had many influences. I can't believe that somebody can come out of the forest and do plenty of things. We are the reflection of many people, many people, dead people, living people, Victor Hugo, Moliere, Corneille, Racine, La Fontaine who are very important for me. And after that, new writers like Piaf, Charles Trenet and Chevalier.

**How about the influence of your family?**

The first influence was the family, of course, my parents. My mother who was from Adabazar, was a very good actress. When they filmed Saroyan's play, "My Heart is in the Highlands," which in those days was done in one take, they tried to find an Armenian to play one of the parts – my mother. And my father who was from Georgia, was a good singer. They were both open to letting the children do what they wanted to do. In those days, there was a feeling among Armenians that their children becoming artists was a lost cause. Poor children, they won't make it, they used to say.

**You have written more than a thousand songs, with so many heartfelt and memorable words. What themes have been the most meaningful to you?**

I wrote the kind of songs that have never been touched until now, adventurous themes, more than anybody else. Some, with big names, have written on the same subject years after, but they have forgotten that I was the first to do so. Some knew it;

"My first hope for Armenia is that the people who have left because they have no work, go back home. We are not three million people in Armenia. We are no more than ☒,300,000. We need to be 5 million in Armenia."

Trenet, Cevalier, Piaf all knew it, but the press never, the media never because they didn't like me. Nobody knows why. I don't think there was any reason. Because they had decided that I was not the kind of singer or writer who can make it. Nobody said my songs were not good, or that I was not capable. Though they insisted that I was filling the halls all over the world, it took them 30 years before they acknowledged it.

**So it was your own drive and motivation that led to your success. Did you know from the beginning that you would be a star?**

Yes, no revenge. I didn't try to fight them. I tried to find myself, and go on. But, being a star was not my goal. I knew that I had great songs. I read so much, so I knew what was good and what was not. I knew someday I would be a great writer, maybe not in music. The singing was not important for me – the writing was. And today, it became even more important, because in those days, I had to do things on stage. Today, they take me as I am. They come to listen to my lyrics, and they come in large numbers!

**You said becoming a success was not your goal. What was your goal?**

Surviving. I am an Armenian survivor.

**What is the state of today's popular songs? There are no lyrics.**

There is no music either. There is only loud noise. I am not the only one who says this. I am reading a book now by a very good writer and singer much younger than me and I was amazed to find out we had the same kind of opinion about what is happening today. He realized there was emptiness in the music business today. The business became only a business. Can you imagine that if you write a song that is more than two and a half minutes, you can get it on the air, because publicity is more important? And I never write songs that are two and a half minutes; mine are often seven minutes. Today's singers are also lucky, because the young generation has no taste. They will have no memories when they reach their sixties, seventies... no memories.

**Mr. Aznavour, you have also been extremely successful in film, with more than 60 films. Are there any films that you have special feelings for, such as the very well known, *Shoot the Piano Player*?**

Yes, but that was a second venture. I do not pay attention to that. I was a good actor, that's it. I've done several good movies, and some not good ones, and some for television. But that was not important. What was important was to be on the set, and do something that changed the air. I mean not being responsible for the writing and the staging, the lighting, the voice. But now when they ask me to be in a film, I refuse.

**Is there anything you would change in your career, anything you would do differently?**

If I had any doubts, I would have changed it, and it would have been compromising. There have been no compromises.

**How do you write a song? How does it start? Where do you get the ideas for your songs?**

I don't know. I just write. It's in the air, in newspapers, what you see on television, what you see, what you feel. The words come first, then the music. You know, words have their own music, good or bad, but the good juxtaposition of words has its own music. Melody exists because harmony exists. Young composers have never worked with harmony. I think the last composer we had in France is Michel Legrand. Once I had a conversation with him, since I've known him for a long time. I told him that melody exists because harmony exists. He knew it before me. For me, the words come first, but for some people it's the music first.

**Besides Michel Legrand, are there other singers, composers or musicians that you admire?**

Yes, there are many, but I once said something which amazed people, and that is that MY preferred singer is ME. And I would add, I am not the only one who is saying that, but the other musicians, actors, painters, sculptors, if they're honest, will answer the same way because they give their all. I have always had this feeling.

**You have always said you are 100 percent Armenian and 100 percent French. Can you explain this?**

I never thought about that. It's part of my life, part of my thinking. I was born an Armenian in France. The Armenian education was from my family. Of course the French side took over the Armenian. I don't read or write in Armenian, but I speak Armenian, maybe not so well. However, I manage. I replace a word that I don't know with another word. We have to be frank. I've reached the age of truth. I don't want to die someday with lies on my shoulder.

**During all the interviews I have had with you, you have always impressed me with your honesty and openness.**

I will tell you that those closest to me, my wife, my sister, Levon Sayan, have fought with me because I have said things on stage. But I'm absolutely convinced it's part of my success. It's not success on the stage, but success of the man, because I'm also loved as a man, not only as a singer.

**Mr. Aznavour, you and Mr. Sayan have done many projects in Armenia together since the earth☒uake. Please explain the projects in which you have been so active.** ▸

"We have to bend the heads of state in Turkey. And for that we Armenians have to be shrewd and honest, and not ask for what we can't have. It's now 500 years that we have lost our lands to Turkey, not 90 as some people say."

Yes, I have done nothing alone. I am not able to do them alone. I have too many things to do. What I do has to be helpful; sometimes things we haven't done before, many schools and all their needs, such as food, medicine, books, furniture, etc., and the power to put them through. And there are many, many other projects that are still going. We don't have a big staff in Armenia. Sayan and I travel together. We noticed in Armenia that in most of the humanitarian programs, there are people who get paid, like puppets. In our programs, when something is missing, it comes completely out of our own pockets. When I sing, for example, in "A Night for Armenia," the money totally, totally goes to the projects in Armenia. Everything – or else we would have been broke a long time ago. We have no real help. The Armenians don't send their help easily.

**In your estimation, what does Armenia need most from the Diaspora? Is the Diaspora fulfilling its role, and if not, why?**

There is no 'most.' Armenia needs absolutely everything. To help themselves, they need jobs. Companies should go to Armenia and set up projects to create jobs. We don't have that power because we don't have that money. If we had that money, we could contribute enormously.

The Diaspora is not doing enough, because it is so divided politically, which is terrible. First they should establish an Armenia that is strong, then do what is happening in other countries. Some parties have never been in Armenia before and they want to be the president of the country. This is impossible. First of all, if you want to be so involved, live there, live through what the people there are living through.

**What are your hopes for the future of Armenia?**

My first hope for Armenia is that the people who have left because they have no work, go back home. We are not three million people in Armenia. We are no more than 2,300,000. We need to be 5 million in Armenia. That's very important.

I told President Kocharian at the time, that today we are a nation made up of many different things. We have people of many different religious beliefs who have lived in Armenia for centuries. We have a mafia and prostitutes…this is a nation like any other nation. We are not unique and different from other nations. When we understand that, then we will be able to help the country.

One of the wisest moves of President Serzh Sargsyan was to appoint me as Armenia's Ambassador to Switzerland. I am not the typical ambassador. I am the kind of ambassador you don't find in diplomacy. My name is a help. It helped to bring out the Armenian name in many places. That was a great move.

**How was your family affected by the Genocide?**

In my family, my grandfather, aunt and cousins were killed. At the time of the Genocide, Istanbul was saved in a way because all the embassies were there. When the Armenians, including some of my relatives, went to the rescue boat, the Turkish soldiers tried to prevent them but the ship's captain stopped the soldiers and said that it was an international boat. And an Armenian from America paid for the trip for all the Armenians on the boat. Also, I don't know when, but I am going to De ir Zor.

**How do you feel about the recognition of the Genocide and large amount of money that the Diaspora is spending for its recognition?**

As far as the recognition of the Genocide is concerned, we are doing our work… for free. We in the Diaspora have to be shrewd, clever and use any opportunity to advance our goals. I'm a friend of the Turks who haven't yet understood that what they read is wrong and false. I don't believe in insulting them but in fighting through education. You know how many brave writers and intellectuals are banned in Turkey today? A few weeks ago, an Armenian soldier was killed. There was so much fear in the government that the Armenians would think that the past would repeat itself. Therefore, some members of the government went to the church to pray. This had never happened before. There were also many Turks who joined the Armenians during the funeral of Hrant Dink. The road is there. We have to bend the heads of state in Turkey. And for that we Armenians have to be shrewd and honest, and not ask for what we can't have. It's now 500 years that we have lost our lands to Turkey, not 90 as some people say. Germany lost Alsace-Lorraine to France and they don't ask for it anymore. We have to learn that. If we want to have something, we have to give something, or else we won't have anything. Turkey is going to be a very strong country, with a large population, geographic power and money.

You notice the Armenians who never had any problems, but the parents and grandparents had this burden on their shoulders: the Genocide. [Sayan interjects stating that maybe the issue of recognition is more important for the Armenians in the Diaspora than the Armenians in Armenia.] We'll be more effective if we approach that differently. For example, when I meet Turks, I am very close to them, very sympathetic. What I want is to change a little of what's in their heads. I noticed, when they translated my book to Turkish, they left out everything I had written about the Genocide. I go to Turkish restaurants to show them that we are different than what they are. And I think I have succeeded a great deal because I know



now that in Turkey an enormous number of people are waiting for me to go there.

**Have you performed in Turkey, and if not, would you?**

I sang there when I was very young. I was banned from the air in Turkey for a long time, but now you can hear Aznavour on Turkish radio very often. And of course I would sing there with pleasure. I am ready to sing in Turkey but the invitation has to be official, not from a society or a group. The daughter of Hrant Dink asked me to come, saying it would be very important for the Armenians there. I said I will come, but the government has to invite me officially. I've received invitations from different ministers, but I want the head of the government to invite me.

**What are your hopes for the future of your children and grandchildren?**

We have to forget the problems of our children. We have to think about the children of Armenia who are born there and living there. They are going to be the future of the country. Our children are lost for Armenia. They are going to forget everything. They will never go there. They have their own lives to live. I am in the process now of helping a couple – she's Armenian, he's French – to adopt a young Armenian, but I made it clear that they have to send the child to an Armenian school. To be a real Armenian, you have to learn the language.

**When you have any free time, what do you do for relaxation?**

Nothing. I read everything extensively, especially history of ancient Greece, the Middle East, Armenia, Russia, France, England, French philosophy and biographies...the most important things of the past. I mainly read in French.

**The last time we spoke was two years ago, you were on your last tour. Are you still performing concerts?**

We don't do big tours, but I sing. [Sayan adds that Aznavour will give 35 concerts in France this year from September 7 to December 4, including 22 in Paris.] For lengthier contracts, I sing and then relax because the opening night is always a difficult one. We're going to Brazil, and there I will do nothing for two days. If I don't economize myself, I won't be able to work. I will be tired and the performance will be bad.

**All of us will one day meet our Maker. What would you like to have written on your resting place?**

[He chuckles for a moment.] I haven't thought about that. I have written eight or 10 funny things on the topic that can't be translated. Religion is part of our people and country. Religion is what helps the young people choose the right path, to learn what we have learned in the family, morality, ethics, and joy. I am not a believer in church. I go to church for baptisms, marriages and funerals.

**Who is Charles Aznavour?**

I'm a very serious man who knows how to laugh, and what a sense of humor means. I am not a star. I am a worker. A star is a flash that disappears. It means nothing to be a star. I have two intelligences: the intelligence of my work, which is the most important, and the intelligence to know what to do, and what not to do. This is sufficient for me.

**Mr. Aznavour, you look to be in excellent physical shape. What is the secret to your good health?**

I'm beautiful. [he laughs heartily] Optimism! I am very optimistic. ■



# “Yerevan My Love” in London

A major fundraising was held in London for the “Yerevan My Love” project in Armenia with the aim of improving the life experience of disabled children, young people and disadvantaged families, while preserving architecturally significant buildings in Yerevan. Two events were organized in appreciation of the major benefactors and supporters of this charitable project. The evening of appreciation at Buckingham Palace hosted by His Royal Highness Prince of Wales and the “Armenian Day” hosted by the project initiators and main benefactors Nouneh and Armen Sarkissian at the Royal Ascot.

Photos **Tigran Tovmasyan**

Project initiator and main benefactor Armen Sarkissian, the former Prime Minister of Armenia and President of Eurasia House International, welcomed more than 250 guests from around the world with His Royal Highness, Prince Charles. Members of the royal family, dignitaries, world renowned political, cultural and civic leaders, and senior executives of global corporations attended this unique charity event. The Prime Minister of Armenia, Tigran Sargsyan, and Mayor of Yerevan, Karen Karapetyan were among the guests of honor.

“It gives me the greatest pleasure to be able to welcome you all to this very special occasion at Buckingham Palace,” said the Prince of Wales in his remarks and expressed his thanks to all the donors of “Yerevan My Love” and the magnificent stately Dumfries House.

The evening started with a reception, followed by an extraordinary concert, especially put together for this occasion. World renowned soprano Renée Fleming and violin virtuoso and conductor Maxim Vengerov, took part in the program, along with the Philharmonia Orchestra (London) and the Bach Choir. In addition to Handel, the choir sang most moving pieces from the Armenian liturgy, “Surb, Surb” and “Hayr Mer” by Makar Ekmalian. As a tribute to “Yerevan My Love,” Vengerov played Komitas’ “Krung” for the first time in his musical career, captivating the emotions of the audience. Fleming enthralled the audience not only with her superb and mesmerizing voice, but also with her poignant remarks.

A banquet followed in the magnificent Picture Gallery of the Palace. The Prince of Wales underlined that “the evening is also an occasion to strengthen the strong ties and friendship between Armenia and the United Kingdom.” He said, “I have long admired Armenia as the oldest Christian nation in the world, with its unique architectural heritage. It is so heartening that the ‘Yerevan My Love’ project is preserving and continuing traditional Armenian architecture and craftsmanship.”

Armen Sarkissian thanked His Royal Highness for his visionary leadership and foresight in many critical issues facing not only Britain but also the entire globe. In his remarks, Sarkissian highlighted the role of every individual in the preservation of culture and heritage and



←
Socializing was a dominant theme throughout the night. (From left to right) Armen Sarkissian, Prince Charles, Ruben Vardanyan, and Gor Nakhapetian.





↑
Charles Aznavour, along with Prince Charles (left) and Armen Sarkissian.

→
Sarkissian (center) and wife Nouneh entertained guests throughout the night.



the universality of culture. He said, "It is a privilege for me to thank each and every one of you for your contributions, for your support and, most important, for sharing a belief that culture and heritage are part of our soul and we have to pass it on to the next generation, to our children."

"Yerevan My Love" is a heritage-led regeneration project with two main high social impact goals. The first is to restore, reconstruct and safeguard the historic districts of Yerevan and coordinate efforts to save the artistic and architectural heritage of the 3000-year-old capital city, its traditions and neighborhoods. The project will help to improve the education and life experiences of children and young people, especially orphans and those who come from disadvantaged communities. It will also assist children and youth with special needs to gain confidence and independence in life.

"Yerevan My Love" will focus on constructing buildings based on archival architectural drawings and designs, which are unique to Yerevan and to the period, while at the same time using the parts of the buildings that have been preserved to reconstruct them.

Following the successful fundraising last year, work started for the first phase of the project in Yerevan in April 2011. This year's fundraising will benefit the construction of three additional architecturally significant buildings in the Old Yerevan neighborhood as part of the second phase of the project.

The quality of design, construction documents and details are beyond regular commercial projects. All works are performed by highly qualified professionals and are verified and supervised in Armenia and abroad to ensure the highest standards in design and specification. Particular attention is given to high quality workmanship. Domus Design, an international architectural, design and management firm, with offices in Rome, Los Angeles, and Yerevan, will carry out the work under the direction of its principal architect Dr. Marco Brombilla. By restoring historic buildings and adapting them for new and vibrant uses, the project will implement its main vision aimed at the improvement of living conditions and quality of life of people from disadvantaged social backgrounds.

# Seven Years in Paradise

In April of 2009, the House of Representatives of the state of Hawaii adopted a formal measure setting aside April 24 as a "Day of Remembrance in Recognition of and Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide of 1915." The language of the resolution acknowledged the life and art of an Armenian-American artist of genius: Arman Manookian.

Text **John Seed**



Bob Bangerter

Armenia's ties to Hawaii started in the 1920s with the gifted painter Arman T. Manookian, a Genocide survivor who lived in Hawaii almost six years before his tragic death in 1931 and became known as Hawaii's Van Gogh.

Born in Istanbul in 1904, Arman Manookian was the eldest son of the publisher of one of the city's more than 50 Armenian newspapers. The fading splendor of Istanbul colored Arman's childhood imagination. He once told an interviewer that he was from "Byzantium... the eastern capital of the Roman Empire."

Manookian, who was called "Tateos" as a young man, was educated at the school of St. Gregory the Illuminator. The principal of the school, Daniel Varoujan, was a leader of the "Mehians," a group of intellectuals who envisioned an Armenian cultural Renaissance. Varoujan, it should be noted, was tortured and executed by Turkish authorities in April of 1915.

On April 24, 1915, Turkish authorities targeted Arman's father for arrest, along with several hundred other Armenian leaders and intellectuals. Arshag Manookian fled to France, where he died in the Spanish flu epidemic two years later. Tateos, his mother and two siblings stayed behind, living in fear as the Armenian Genocide unfolded in the nearby provinces.

← "Red Sails"
60x72 inches
oil on board
Collection of John and Patty Dilks



Douglas Frazer Fine Art

## "Color became Manookian's trademark, reflecting his absorption of Byzantine color as a young man."

↑ "Hawaiian Traders"
47x37 inches
oil on board
Private Collection

Using money from the sale of the family printing company, sixteen year-old Manookian arrived on Ellis Island in April of 1920. A scholarship allowed him to enroll at the Rhode Island School of Design, and he later took night classes at the Art Students League of New York.

In 1923, Manookian, who now called himself "Arman," joined the Marine Corps hoping to see the world. He caught the attention of Major Edwin McClellan, a historian working on a 1,000-page history of the Corps. Private Manookian provided hundreds of historical sketches for the book, which was never published. ▸

**John Seed**

When Hawaii-based private art dealer Sheldon Geringer mentioned the name Arman Manookian to John Seed in late 1999, Seed had never published an article and Manookian was an artist shrouded in mystery. It took Seed more than a year of searching to locate the artist's nephew in France, but once that happened his research took off. "Fragile Paradise," which appeared in *Honolulu Magazine* in November 2001 won the first-time writer a "Society of Professional Journalist's" Award in Arts and Entertainment writing. Since then, Seed, a Professor of Art at Mount San Jacinto College in Southern California, has written about Manookian for *The Armenian Reporter*, *Maui No Ka Oi*, and *The Huffington Post* Arts section where he is a regular contributor. He has written about other artists for Harvard, Stanford and Christie's Hong Kong, and has published two books: *Nine Artists and Arman Manookian: An Armenian Artist in Hawaii*.

One moment that Seed will never forget is while he was doing research on Manookian's early years in the US, an elderly Armenian man from Rhode Island told him: "I didn't think that non-Armenians cared to write about what happened." According to Seed, "Hearing that really convinced me of the importance of my research." Seed holds a BA with Distinction in Art from Stanford University, and an MA in Painting from UC Berkeley. He is a cancer survivor and a father of three.



↑
Artist Arman Tateos Manookian, photo taken as a 23 year-old (circa 1927)

In June of 1925 when McClellan was assigned to Pearl Harbor, Manookian followed him. Soon after, McClellan became editor of *Paradise of the Pacific Magazine* and asked Manookian to provide illustrations. The artist created historical depictions of the Hawaiians' first encounters with the Europeans and Americans who would come to dominate them. His idealized portrayal of the native population may have reflected a commercially popular style, but it's tempting to speculate, given his past, that Manookian felt a special affinity for another subjugated people.

In Hawaii, Manookian bloomed as an artist. He loved to sketch the ramshackle homes that can still be found on local beaches, and paint mythological and historical scenes with fervor, infusing them with drama and energy.

After his military discharge in late 1927, Manookian joined the art staff of *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and worked there for the next three years. He also joined the newly formed Association of Honolulu Artists and began to execute his first large oil paintings. Color became Manookian's trademark, reflecting his absorption of Byzantine color as a young man. His flat, bold applications of color were challenging to those who first saw them, including visitors to his one-man show at the Honolulu Academy in May of 1928. Manookian told art critic Clifford Gessler that he believed in the "emotional significance" of color and that he aimed to create color



←
"Lei Seller"
10x8 inches
Gouache on paper
Mitchell Brown Fine Art




↑
"Hawaiian Landscape"
26x34 inches
oil on board
Private Collection

Douglas Frazer Fine Art



→
"Ala Wai"
26x34 inches
oil on board
Private Collection

Douglas Frazer Fine Art

harmonies that suggested "repose and satisfaction." A group of Arman's strikingly modern paintings were soon purchased by two of the most influential women in Honolulu: the sugar heiress Helene Irwin Fagan and socialite Muriel Damon. Despite Manookian's success with collectors, his erratic behavior damaged his reputation. His temper led him into heated discussions about art and culture, and he was often dissatisfied with his own work. At one exhibition, he flew into a rage and tore up several of his paintings.

In 1931, Manookian was sharing a home with an architect who dabbled in photography. After shutting himself in his room for several days, some say because he was despondent over a botched affair with the architect's wife, Manookian drank photo developer, opened the door, and dropped dead in front of a group of friends. He was 27 years old. In France, his mother, brother and sister were shocked at the news. Well-meaning friends in Honolulu sent them Arman's watch and two paintings, consoling the family by telling them that he had been a "great artist" who had created murals for the Honolulu Opera House. In truth, his last public work had been a four-foot wide mural painted over the drinking fountain of the Waipahu Theatre.

In the late 1950s, his final painting was found on a curbside in Honolulu and rescued by a family that recognized its value. Today that painting is being offered for a six-figure price by a private dealer in Hawaii. One of Manookian's finest works, originally created as a mural for a Honolulu restaurant, reportedly sold for $500,000 in 2005.

> "Manookian had the gift of genius, and, if he had not died so tragically young, even of greatness." – Ronn Ronck

Manookian is still relatively unknown on the US mainland, where Arshile Gorky, who also came to America in the aftermath of the Genocide, is recognized as the greatest Armenian-American artist. It is time for a major US museum to gather Manookian's rare works and ask the mainland public for a new assessment of his achievements. In Hawaii, those who know his work have had time to form their opinions.

Ronn Ronck, a former arts editor of *The Honolulu Advertiser* and an author of several books about Hawaii, calls Manookian's art "unique and unforgettable." Ronck further comments that "Manookian had the gift of genius, and, if he had not died so tragically young, even of greatness." ■



# Two Brothers, One Dream

The *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, theatrically debuted in Armenia in the late 1970s and becomes an emblem of the American Dream for a generation of youth living in a country under the Soviet regime. Amongst that youth, Hovik and Gagik Dilakian were eager to discover the next book, record, art exhibit, line of music, or movie clip traveling from the shores of America and sneaking behind the Iron Curtain. Mark Twain's classic was stage directed by Vova Kocharian, the songs written by Ruben Hakhverdyan, and the stage was designed by Hovik Dilakian.

text **Nare Garibyan** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**

In their outdoor studio under the shade of a tree, brothers Hovik and Gagik Dilakian sit side by side, harmoniously working together on their next creation. They thrive on experimentation, sketching, drawing, and conversing with people, constantly in search of inspiration within their fluid style. The brothers believe in unrestrained expression embedded in humor, free of societal pressure to mold a specific type of art. Hovik was uninterested in classroom lectures and preferred to draw in his school notebooks, within his very own imaginative world. Regardless of the rules, Hovik dared to be different and desired to break away from the constraints placed on individualistic expression. Gagik, the younger brother, remembers going to galleries and sitting on a small chair, feet dangling in the air in front of the large paintings, sketching the images on paper. The gallery personnel were accustomed to Gagik's visits and always had his chair ready for him.

Stemming from a theatrical family, the Dilakian brothers inherited their father's humor: the great Tatoul Dilakian, the people's actor, a genius of comedy. As children, their mother, a stage director, encouraged them to draw and express their feelings on paper, strengthening



← "Eary Night" (Van Gogh) 16x13x14 inches



↑
"Mother's Day"
(Arshile Gorky)
15x27x14 inches

→
"Minasavan"
(Minas Avetisyan)
30x15x5 inches

↓
"Chip N Dale"
(Henri Matisse)
23x15.5x8.5 inches





their creative spirit. They were constantly surrounded by poets, artists, playwrights, and actors, engaged in dynamic conversations in tune with their mother's piano strokes.

In Yerevan, the Dilakian brothers entered the art world as illustrators and stage designers. In the late 70s, together with their sister, they wrote a script for a great animated film, *The Found Dream*, that is popular to this day. It is about a young girl and her grandfather as they travel through paintings in a dream-like world, entering a forest in the daytime and a starry nightscape in search of life's meaning. At the end, both awaken, as the young girl finds her grandfather asleep under a tree. Hovik explained that "like the characters in the film, nothing was changing around them. We wanted to break free from the boundaries we were forced to live in. We were young and our blood boiled, yearning to experience something new."

Simultaneously, as they matured into artists, their span of the imagination expanded, which included Salvador

"We wanted to break free from the boundaries we were forced to live in. We were young and our blood boiled, yearning to experience something new."

Dali's colors, irregular shapes, and fantastic themes, along with Disney's animated classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. These served as a strong contrast against the reality the brothers lived in, a stark background of realism and socialism espoused by the Soviet regime.



← "No Trespassing" (Fernand Léger) 20x19.5x13.5 inches



← "Artist Muse" (Pablo Picasso) 15x20x13 inches



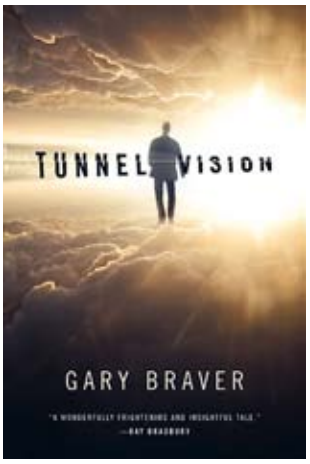
↑ "Daliwood" (Salvador Dali) 18x14x15.5 inches

The Dilakian brothers dreamt of coming to America, in search of an environment where they could freely share their thoughts and engage in unhindered creativity. When they reunited in New York in the late 80s, after a 10 year separation, they delved into functional art, designing clothing and household items, umbrellas and scarfs. Their dream to come to America successfully manifested, bringing forth a new dream of encouraging people to approach life with humor and a creative spirit.

Hovik and Gagik Dilakian are unafraid to show their vulnerabilities, fearless in choosing the next project, the next theme, the next artistic medium. They do not have a formal art education, which allows Hovik and Gagik the "freedom to create; not pressured to remain in the lines, our individuality remains intact, allowing us to work in any style," the brothers comment with a hint of laughter in their voices.

Recently, the brothers completed a series of 40 art boxes, featuring famous artists such as Dali, Van Gogh, Arshile Gorky, and Minas. Each box contains specific details pertaining to each artist's personality and contribution to the art world. The boxes serve as miniature scenes from a staged play, the actors within the frame of each box, frozen in time and action. Paint, wood, metal, pens for table legs, small bits and pieces of everyday items are used to create the minute details and textures of each box. Gagik states that "the purpose of the boxes is to humanize the great artists, to make them more relatable to the general public, showcasing a scene from their lives, raw and humorous." ■

"We create a union together, one brother completing the other, we become mirror images of each other, the same, yet different. It is our strength."




# A Grey Matter of Life and Death

If science could prove the existence of God, would people believe in Heaven? On a quest to find life after death, scientists attempt to transform a coma victim into the greatest religious discovery in history. But with sinister forces lurking in the background, this spiritual journey is obstructed as it ventures into the paranormal. Bestselling author Gary Braver takes readers to the light in his new thriller, *Tunnel Vision*, which explores the different possibilities of sentience and eternal life.

Text **Lilit Barsegyan**

Though rapid advancements in technology and medicine are quite fascinating, the irony of some of it is rather puzzling. In this millennium, we are still unable to find a cure for Alzheimer's, but yet, bear witness the manifestation of the "Octomom." Are we making remarkable improvements or tampering with God's Law? Where do we draw the line? As the need for truth expands, so do our horizons. Science and religion clash as neurology and theology attempt to fuse and find common ground. Such is the theme featured by several New Age writers, including Gary Goshgarian, also known as Gary Braver, author of *Tunnel Vision* and seven bestselling critically acclaimed thrillers. As a result of a previous novel (*Elixir*), being optioned for a movie by director Ridley Scott, Goshgarian was asked to adopt a pen name. Braver, a loose translation of his grandfather's name, Garabed, became the name his latest books, including *Tunnel Vision*, have been published under.

As an award-winning English Professor at Northeastern University, Goshgarian teaches Science Fiction, Modern Bestsellers, Horror Fiction and Fiction Writing. Combined with a degree in physics, Braver's interest in bio-medical novels is clearly discernible. *Tunnel Vision* is a riveting tale about the aftermaths of a coma, exploring religious discoveries and the possibility of an afterlife. "A combination of heritage pride and a chance to promote things Armenian" is Braver's cause for an Armenian protagonist



**Gary Goshgarian**
As an award-winning English Professor at Northeastern University, Goshgarian is the best-selling author of seven critically acclaimed thrillers. In addition, his books have been translated into five different languages. With a background in science, Goshgarian found his niche in biomedical thrillers after his third book, *Rough Beast*, received great reviews. Taking great pride in his heritage, he never ceases to introduce Armenian characters in his books, including *Tunnel Vision*.

in almost all of his novels. In *Tunnel Vision*, Zack Kashian, a financially troubled college student, falls into a coma when he is befallen by a biking accident. A brief awakening on Good Friday doesn't give family and friends much hope when Kashian mutters a few phrases in gibberish, "but then resumed his coma state as if nothing had happened." But "according to Arthur Avedisian, Harvard Professor of Near Eastern Languages, his recorded words came from the Sermon on the Mount" in the ancient language of Aramaic. And after fully awakening on Easter, he is crowned as a "Miracle Man," leaving religious fanatics proclaiming that "the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking through Zachary." Though Kashian dismisses the claims and tries to resume with his normal life, he becomes the target of an experiment seeking evidence of light at the end of the tunnel.

Strapped for cash, Kashian agrees to become a paid volunteer as a participant in a sleep study. An opportunity to catch up on his sleep while it pays his bills seems like the perfect solution to get out of debt. But little does he know that his post-coma powers are perils in disguise. Braver introduces different aspects in this novel such as telepathy, near-death and out of body experiences, creating several avenues for his readers to consider. With his brain shut down, Kashian's mind delves into dangerous territory unaware of its surroundings and out of his control. Are these telepathic powers a sign from God or merely a neuroscientific function? In *Angels and Demons* and *The Lost Symbol*, bestselling author Dan Brown believes that "science and religion are not at odds. Science is simply too young to understand." And though the technological advancements in the novel support Brown's theory, Braver's ultimate goal in *Tunnel Vision* is "to find God. With this book I decided to go all the way up and tackle one of the two greatest mysteries of human existence: where did we come from and where do we go?" Braver's best achievement in this novel is formulating this mission to find God as the focus of various characters, including the antagonist. Roman Pace, a ruthless assassin hired the by the Catholic Church, is a brilliant way of demonstrating every human's desire to find righteousness. Despite the celestial and beatific nature suggested by some of the topics, the core of the story is astoundingly bracing. Pace is led to believe that his former life as a hit man needs to be restored in order to terminate the satanic doings of blasphemous evangelists. His mission is to "Kill for Christ." Cold cash in exchange for murder, as well as "salvation, should [he] accept this mission," was nowhere near how he imagined redemption for his prior life, but an offer he couldn't resist. Indeed, he questions the contradiction of the operation several times, but the impactful wording makes it all seem logical. "Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit."

In spite of possible complications and, moreover, collision with evil forces, what possesses some, more than others, to search for divinity? An indirect theme, paralleled with Braver's own history, is the illustration of a mother's love and devotion for her child. Dr. Elizabeth Luria, the main scientist behind the operation, isn't simply trying to make a breaking discovery in neurobiology nor is she being lured by a million dollar check given by the televangelist funding the project. After losing her son in a car accident, Luria's only wish is proof of an afterlife in the hope of being reunited with her son one day. And when Kashian, the exhausted guinea pig, is ready to quit, Luria's plea brings him back on board. "I want to confirm that the afterlife exists. I want confirmation that my child may still be alive in some form." Tracing back to his family tree, Braver portrays strong female characters and their maternal intuition. "Also celebrated is the toughness of Armenian women," says Braver. Sharing family stories from the Goshgarian chronicles, Braver explains how his paternal grandmother, one of his inspirations, saved her three children from the Turks. "Knowing that the march through the Syrian Desert meant death, she managed to befriend a kind Turkish man, joining his harem to save her kids. Eventually, behind the scenes, she managed to get them to Bulgaria and then to Cuba for nine months. While still in Turkey, she arranged a transatlantic marriage to Pilar Goshgarian who agreed to sponsor the children from the displaced persons camp outside Havana. She was as tough as they get."

Having found his niche in bio-medical thrillers, Braver unravels the "ascending progression in the core fantasies" in his previous five novels: "*Elixir*: Develop an anti-aging drug; *Gray Matter*: Develop a procedure that raises the intelligence of 'slow' children to that of genius; *Flashback*: Develop a cure for Alzheimer's Disease in an aging America; *Skin Deep*: Get that supermodel's face you've always wanted; *Tunnel Vision*: Find God." Spiritual or not, Braver wants his readers to have "an open mind. That absolutism on either side – religion or science – can create dangerous 'tunnel vision.'" Outlining family bonds through supernatural forces is the storyline Braver provides, but his message is far more than the fictional substance provided. Braver's future goals include writing more stories that will "entertain, educate, and make readers think." And since Braver's novels have a "thematic nature" equipped with a "warning: Watch out what you wish for," I am anticipating more thrills and chills in the near future. ■

# THE WORLD IN 3D

I once promised myself that I'd never to write about dolma, because of the alarming frequency with which the subject surfaces, turning into a comical cliché. Four years ago, I visited a friend who lives in Arizona. After two days of playing tennis and enjoying each other's company, we cooked dolma and invited her colleague, Prof. Nasser Peyghambarian, to a nostalgic feast. The traditional toasts were followed by a professional discussion. As Peyghambarian was describing his work, I thought that he could've been interested in meeting Dr. Arkady Bablumian, a specialist in the field of applied optics. Shortly after, the two scientists met and have collaborated ever since. Thus, the humble dolma became the catalyst for the groundbreaking research on the 3-D Telepresence.

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

Years ago, when Dr. Arkady Bablumian arrived in the United States, landing in Lubbock, Texas, his hopes of finding a job in his field of optical physics were not very high. Remembering that he had extensive experience as a mountain climber, he found a job painting tall water towers. However, soon his lifelong love for physics took over and, overcoming his natural modesty, presented himself to the Head of Optical System Laboratory at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. The professor looked at the paint-stained hands and the fine intelligent face of the interviewee and hired him on the spot. Since then, Dr. Bablumian continues his research in the field of holographic imaging, having moved from Texas Tech to various private companies, he works alongside his long-time colleagues from Armenia, who arrived in the US at his request to work on what they started years ago. "We should probably start from what we have achieved so far, and what is worthy of attention. We are creating 3D television, which allows seeing three-dimensional images of any size, without any glasses, which are presently used. Our research has countless applications in various spheres – in medicine, military, and entertainment. The three-dimensional images can be transferred in real time scale to our special displays which could then be projected into 3D images. If I knew then what a long and difficult road would be ahead of me, I would have probably never started working on this. We reached this point step-by-step, gaining substantial experience in this area of physics," says Dr. Bablumian.

**What's so good about 3D, besides that it is interesting and fun?**

It allows transferring and seeing real images just as they are in present time and the way people normally see things. When we look at ordinary two-dimensional photographs, we approximate what we see, send signals to the brain and imagine how it would look like in real life. But the most natural way of seeing it is in three dimensions, where one could see depth, or the inside of the object. This idea is not new; it came to surface at the same time when holographic images were created, 50 or 60 years ago. But for many reasons, this hasn't being realized to this day. The most important reason has been the lack of materials.

**What are the essential components of the holographic imaging technologies?**

In order to make a display that shows 3D images, we need to have special material that will allow recording and erasing the holographic images an indefinite number of times. If we could load these images with a speed of 1/30 of a second, or 1/60 of a second, which is standard video format, we would be able to see it like the images in movies or on TV. The distinction is that on TV, the moving images are two-dimensional, but on this display they are three-dimensional. The creation of such material was the dream of Prof. Nasser Peyghambarian.



His group at the the University of Arizona's College of Optical Sciences in Tucson has developed a polymer that has photo-refractive ability. A range of such photo-refractive materials, mainly crystals, were known before. But to grow a crystal of such dimensions is impossible. The polymers developed at the Optical Science Center are ordinary materials that, after melting, could be poured on a surface of any dimensions, on which the holographic images could be uploaded. Prof. Peyghambarian's group has developed such a photo-refractive polymer. Peyghambarian collaborates with Nitto Denko Technical Corporation in Oceanside, California, which invested substantial funds for the development of that dynamic material. They have built a laboratory, for me at first, and now there are two more experimental physicists who joined me from the Arizona's College of Optical Sciences group.

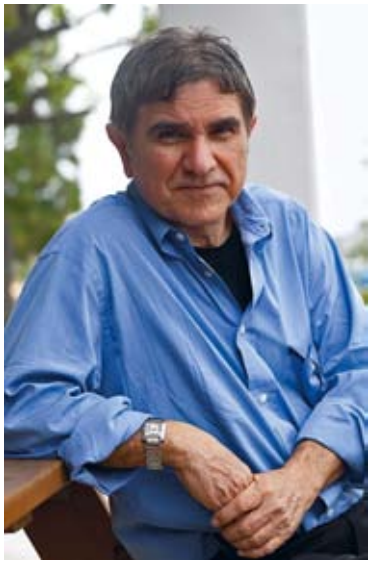
**What is your individual input in this?**
I am doing the experimental part of it. I thought that in America everything is done differently, but it turned out everything is done the same way: one has to do everything himself. Here in the United States there is an incomparable range of opportunities. But unless we create devices ourselves, nothing would happen. So the Soviet background and work experience came in handy here as well. It allowed us to make absolutely everything in our laboratory: all the optics on which these devices are built upon are made on-site. We can't buy it anywhere else because they simply do not exist. And to find anyone else who would develop them would require colossal time and monetary investments. Nevertheless, the first step of creating the prototype of the device should be accomplished shortly. This is a completely new device not developed anywhere else.

**What are the possible applications of your discovery?**
Let's start by stating that all new discoveries were done disregarding the fact whether people could or could not see their applied value and use at the time of the discovery. If it is a new and useful invention, the applications will follow sooner or later. But even right now, one can see many spheres to which our discovery could be applied. First, it is the television; people would see the transferred images in its natural form. It could be widely used in health care. In real-time one could see what is going on with the organs while the person is undergoing a surgical procedure. The surgeons would be able to perform procedures effectively without guessing or mistakes, because they would be able to see the three-dimensional images inside the body as though the patient were transparent. The images could be visualized and obtained the same way

**Dr. Arkady Bablumian, Ph.D.**
Dr. Arkady Bablumian graduated from the Department of Physics at Yerevan State University. He received his Ph.D. in 1985 from the Physical Institute of the Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia, pioneering in holographic photolithography. Bablumian worked as a research scientist in Moscow, Yerevan and Lubbock, Texas. He has over 30 years of Research and Development and industrial experience as a lead researcher in various fields of Applied Optics: Integrated Optics, 3-D Displays, Projection Photolithography, Laser Technology, Fiber-Optics Telecommunications, Optical Computing, Holography, Optical Data Storage and Processing, and Optical Security. He has developed more than 100 projects; many of them are patented. He is currently working on the development of real-time 3-D Displays based on dynamic recording of holographic 3-D images synthesized from photographs (perspectives) of arbitrary objects. This is the first successful attempt to build truly holographic 3-D displays with multiple write-read-erase cycles with all well known advantages specific to holograms: full color, full parallax, practically no limitation on resolution and observation angle.

**Professor Nasser Peyghambarian**
Peyghambarian received his Ph.D. in solid-state Physics from Indiana University in 1982, specializing in optical properties of semiconductors. He is currently a professor at both the College of Optical Sciences and the Department of Materials Science & Engineering at the University of Arizona. Peyghambarian is the Chair of Photonics and Lasers at the University of Arizona as well as Director of the Photonics Initiative.
He is also the director of the newly created National Science Foundation Engineering Research Center on Integrated Access Networks. He is Chairman of the Board and Founder of NP Photonics, Inc.
Peyghambarian is also the Founder of TIPD, LLC. He is the recipient of the University of Arizona 2007 "Technology Innovation Award"; "International Francqui Chair", Belgium 1998-1999; TRW Young Faculty Award; and "3M Company's Young Faculty Award."
He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Optical Society of America (OSA), the Society for Optical Engineers (SPIE) and the American Physical Society (APS). His research interests include nanophotonics; waveguide and fiber optics; among many of his other pursuits.





as the MRI or X-Ray images. For the military, during military operations it would allow seeing the visual representation of possible targets, or see the danger in real-time in three-dimensional format, which is crucial. The military establishments make large investments into such research.

**What are the challenges you face?**
Our next task is to create a smaller-scale device and to be able to assemble not only large installations for the military or healthcare, but relatively small ones for consumers as well. There is still a tremendous amount of work ahead of us. Metaphorically speaking, it's like when you climb a huge mountain – you take step after step towards the top, you stretch the ropes, try to reach up to the next small ledge... Each of your steps is risky and grueling, but soon you look back to find out unimaginably beautiful valleys spread down below and endless blue heavens above, and there is a feeling of accomplishment. Of course, what we achieved at this point could hardly be called the pinnacle, but what is left behind is a mountain of work.

**Do the polymers developed by the University of Arizona team, allow erasing and recording the information?**
We can project any scene – several regular photographic images sent through the Internet to our device, are processed and formed into a three-dimensional image in real time. A person at a distant location sends his images and the recipient is able to see him on the other side of the planet in 3-D format. The most significant advantage is that the size of the informational file that is required is very small – only several photographs. Through certain specific steps, these photographs generate other photographic images. At this point, we have achieved a capacity to acquire three-dimensional images with a frequency of 2/3 seconds, which already allows seeing a slow motion of a three-dimensional object. But we have a telepresence. There is a lot to be done and improved, but the reality already exists. Our next step is to increase the speed of the downloading process of these three-dimensional frames to 1/30 of a second and make the devices more compact.



**What is the difference between your devices and the existing 3-D technologies?**

The present day market for 3-D is huge. All major companies are trying to develop 3-D technologies. There are various kinds of 3-D screens, even of significantly large size. First, there is the widely known 3-D cinema, which requires glasses because the left eye gets the images that belong to the left and right eye, and based on this the human brain processes the images and understands the depth. This could be done with the help of glasses and with the help of so-called holographic screens; it could be also done through stereo photography, the photographs of winking girls, etc., various phases of movement that the viewer could see by changing his position. But all of that is not holography and has huge limitations. One can see the three-dimensional image of the object only from a single point when it comes to the stereo movies, or from three or four points on a projection screen, and with an angle of approximately 7 to 8 degrees in the latest 3-D TVs of companies such as Samsung and Toshiba, which are displayed on a screen with a lens roster. Their principle is to project scenes that had been shot with nine or 10 cameras placed at various positions. When projected, they allow the receiving of a different image with each of the eyes, and by moving slightly one can see each of these nine images, allowing the brain to process and create an impression of a depth of an object. However, none of these existing technologies are based on holography. Our work is the only one at this point. One might ask why, and the answer is in the extreme complexity of the task. It should be noted that the hologram is the most natural way to transmit three-dimensional images. The origin of the word is exactly that – it means "whole image." There are no limitations of the quality of the scene from the angular point of view: one can see the image from all points of a 360-degree angle. The resolution of the images also can be very large, with practically no limitations, as opposed to the devices based on stereo photography that are on the existing market. These technologies have significant limitations when it comes to image resolution. So we are the only ones who develop 3-D that is based on holography and our significance is in those two reasons: the capacity to view the images from a 360-degree point of view and the possibility of very high image resolution.

**Why did others not do the same and develop these technologies, if holography has been known for such a long time?**

The specifics of research and development of new technologies in the United States is such that each company has a narrow specialization in certain areas. But in our case, we needed to create 15 to 20 absolutely unrelated devices in order to make the entire thing work. So to find 20 various companies to develop these parts and make sure that all these companies collaborate with each other is practically impossible. It would require a lot of time and money. We created and constructed all these independently, without outside assistance or participation. ■

# Lyun

Text **Aram Khachatourian**

**Լ is the twelfth letter of the Armenian alphabet. It is called "lyun," and its graphic form is almost identical to the Latin "L." The sole difference lies in the horizontal part of the letter – the Latin version's ending is bent upwards while the Armenian counterpart's ending is directed downward.**

Լ L



Suren Manvelyan

**The shapes of letter Լ in manuscripts of different centuries**



862 1155 1170

Despite the obvious similarities, the letters are more like replicas of each other than twins. To say the least, prominent experts of the Armenian language have never considered the possibility of the origin of Armenian Լ being Latin. Yet, approaches differ when discussing the topic. The Greek letter Λ lambda, the Phoenician letter 𐤋, and Armenian



letters Ի and even Ղ were considered to be the prototypes for Լ. The version tying Լ and Ղ seemed unrealistic since the corresponding sound of Ղ (something in between G and Kh) is completely different from Լ. This is true in contemporary times, but in the 5th century, both letters were considered different versions of the [leh] sound, and only throughout time (presumably no later than the 9th century) did Ղ transform into its current role (gh). That is why, considering the fact that Լ and Ղ were somehow close in the way they sounded, it is quite possible that the two are connected in terms of their graphic forms. The phonetic proximity of Լ and Ղ is based on their positions in old Armenian. As famous French linguist Antoine Meillet noticed, each of those letters had a distinct reason to be situated where they were. For instance, Լ was used mainly in the beginning of the word or before a vowel, yet it was never placed in front of a consonant. Ղ, in its turn is never located in the beginning of indigenous Armenian words. In certain cases, however, both letters alternated with each other in the same position, like in the words ջիլ (djil) – tendon, and ջիղ (djikh) – nerve; աղի (aghi) – salty and անալի (anali) – unleavened. The numeric meaning of lyun is 30. In Mashtots' acrostics, the letter XX is denominated by Լույս (light). Light is deemed the traditional symbol of divinity ascending in the Bible: the Lord is the Light (John 11:5). The Armenian 5th century historian Yeghishe writes, "The Lord is not the sun, but the light of the sun of righteousness." The so called *sharakans* (medieval church songs) mention Christ as "the light that is brighter than sunlight." Catholicos Nerses Shnorhali has used the symbolism of light in one of his hymns in the 12th century;

*The light, created by the light,*
*the first of its kind*
*Whose palace is the untouched light!*
*Our Heavenly Father!*
*Praised by the assembly of spirits,*
*created from the light!*
*Illuminate our souls, in the dawn of the light,*
*With your cognitive light.*

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# The People's Champ

**Vic Darchinyan is the littlest grown man you've ever seen, but he's arguably one of the biggest names buzzing around in homes when it comes to boxing. His blazing trail to worldwide superstardom is highlighted by one knockout victory after another. At 35, the "Raging Bull" is still striding with full steam ahead. But don't take our word for it, he'll be more than happy to tell you.**

Text **Manouk Akopyan** | Photo **Tigran Tovmasyan**



Longly heralded as the "Lord of the Flies," Vic Darchinyan's eccentric and outspoken personality makes him the "Lord of the Mic." Spending a better part of five days with the fighter, my notebook began to resemble a gold mine with his random acts of quotaciousness. When he speaks, he gives material that is one punch better than the other. Anytime his promoter Gary Shaw introduces him, he jokingly allows only 30 seconds for his charismatic fighter to speak.

Every other word that comes out of Darchinyan's mouth as he sells a fight begins with "knockout" and ends with "I'm going to destroy him." That is the only thing he promises. Of his 36 wins, the KO guru has delivered on his word 27 times.

The diminutive yet confident southpaw is always looking to prove how good he is, how strong he is and, as all fans have become accustomed to by now, how great he is. His all-action fights are usually Showtime's highest rated.

To call Darchinyan's aggressive fighting style unorthodox is a vast understatement. He sometimes waves his arms in semi-circles above his head before throwing one of his patent left haymakers. Every now and then, he opens his stance, drops his arms to his sides, and dares his opponent to land a punch. Masked under all the unconventional and wildly entertaining tactics of lulling opponents into walking into one of his trademark knockout shots is a smart, gritty and technical fighter. It's all part of the mind games he loves to play, where a thunderous Darchinyan throb can be felt through the seat cushion of your couch. During the first rounds of any fight, he's always looking to find weaknesses, like a shark swimming around helpless prey. He never watches film on his opponents, so as soon as he has one baited in, he pressures and bullies them with hellacious shots to the point of no return.

Fittingly, for a man who pulverizes anything in its way, he's been bestowed the nickname "Raging Bull," also shared by the great Jake Lamotta, the boxer of which had an Oscar-winning film about him in 1980 starring Robert DeNiro.

"If I ever was in a barroom brawl, and I had to choose any fighter, I would ask Vic Darchinyan to be in front of me," says promoter Gary Shaw of his 5-foot 5-inch fighter. "He is the single most loyal fighter I have ever dealt with – or know – in my entire life. For me, I can't give him a bigger compliment than talking about his loyalty."

With the good comes the bad, and Darchinyan is mainly criticized for being inconsistent with his defense and predictable by always looking for the one-punch knockout recipe. Falling under the lines of unpredictable is Vic wanting to jump into the cage of mixed martial arts. He has expressed the sentiment time and time again when frustrated on the progression of fights he's long yearned for.

"I love it when I am the underdog, and when people say I can't. That just fuels me even more to prove my critics wrong," he counters.

His one-dimensional style is similar to that of a former world-class champion he idolized and who doubled his weight in any given fight over 20 years ago, Mike Tyson. The crowd-pleasing Darchinyan is credited for single-handedly bringing the little guys back to television, just as Tyson made every fight a spectacle. Darchinyan has appeared on cable TV's Showtime Network 13 times. He is third on the all-time list for appearances behind Julio Cesar Chavez and Evander Holyfield.

"We're in love with Vic Darchinyan. He's one of the most prolific fighters that have appeared during the 25 years of fights on our network. He's a huge draw and has an exciting style. He's part of our family," says Ken Hershman, the Vice President and General Manager of Showtime Sports.

> "I want to prove my point and show everyone how strong I am at the moment. I have my style, I am who I am. I'm just going to show everything in the ring...only raging and destroying."

Darchinyan also treats his fans like family, as he is one of the most accessible superstars in the sport. His entourage is mostly made up of boisterous baby boomers and families decorated in Raging Bull and Armenian paraphernalia. There is never a picture or autograph request he declines. In the middle of a meal, after an interview, during training, after a fight – whenever – a Sharpie is always seemingly bound to his fingers at all times. Bound to his ring finger is a diamond ring with so many carats, Bugs Bunny would turn the other way. Dangling from his neck is a thick gold chain with a boxing glove hanging by his heart, where he's had the sport close to it ever since he was an eight year-old training in Vanadzor with Vazgen Badalyan.

Earlier this year, on April 23 in Los Angeles, Darchinyan beat Yonnhy Perez for the IBO bantamweight title. With it, he also won a century-long battle outside of the ring when he used the night and his national platform on the televised bout to commemorate the Armenian Genocide. He and his entire team walked into the ring wearing shirts in remembrance and the beltline of his trunks had "1915" written across them. He further delivered the message in a post-fight interview in the ring, and later at his press conference. The next day, he joined the thousands of Armenians advocating Genocide recognition on the streets of Los Angeles.

"April 24 is a very important day for all Armenians around the world. Hopefully, I made it a little better and put a smile on their faces," he said afterwards. "I fight for my son. My family. My parents. And my country – Armenia."

It is for these reasons, Vic Darchinyan is both a champion in his profession and for his countrymen.

Although Darchinyan lives and fights out of his current residence of Australia, he always comes into the ring bearing the Armenian flag, and usually, under the instruments and vocals of



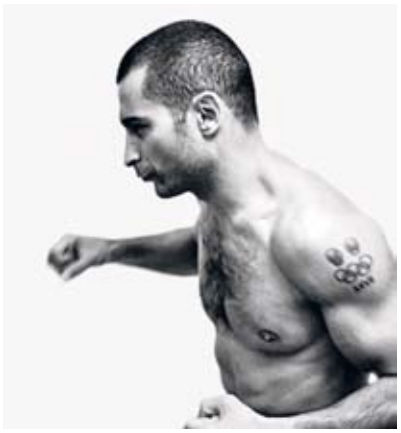

Tom Casino




Tom Casino

**The Raging Bull**

Vakhtang "Vic" Darchinyan was born in Vanadzor, Armenia on January 7, 1976. In the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Darchinyan was an Olympian quarter-finalist representing Armenia at 112 pounds. After a strong amateur record of 152-18 (105 KOs), Darchinyan turned professional in November 2000 in Australia. In 2004, at a record of 21-0, he won the IBF Flyweight World Title against a previously unbeaten Irene Pacheco with an 11th round TKO. It was his first world title victory and fight in the United States. Darchinyan says it was the most momentous victory of his career to date. In August 2008, he won the IBF Super Flyweight title with a fifth round KO over Dimitri Kirilov. Three months later, he TKO'd Cristian Mijares for the WBC and WBA world titles. In 2009, he dominated former WBO and WBA light flyweight champion Jorge Arce with an 11th round TKO. On April 23 this year, he beat Yonnhy Perez for the IBO bantamweight title. His career record currently stands at 36-3-1 (27 KOs). He is 13-2 (10 KOs) in world championship fights. On September 3, he will fight in Yerevan for the first time in his career against Paulus Ambunda at the Karen Demirchyan Complex in Armenia.











Tom Casino

a fellow compatriot. While participating in the World Amateur Championships, Darchinyan was approached by American managers and promoters to become a professional boxer. He did not accept the invitation in order to fulfill his lifelong dream of representing Armenia in the 2000 Olympics, where he reached the quarterfinals and later inked the rings and roman numerals "XXVII" below his left shoulder.

During the Sydney Olympics, an Australian-based trainer, Jeff Fenech, observed his progress in the preliminary bouts and offered him to turn pro. Darchinyan accepted and obtained sponsorship from Henry Hacobian, a well-respected Armenian businessman living in Sydney. Having entered Australia on a temporary visa for the Olympics, he returned to Armenia with the expectation of returning to Australia to pursue his professional career. After turning pro in 2000 and fighting in the country until 2004, he became an Australian citizen on July 7, 2004. Today, he is a superstar, a restauranteur, and a household name in the country, where he lives with his son and wife.

Now, Darchinyan has come full circle as he returns to the birthplace of his colorful and championship decorated amateur boxing background with his homecoming fight against Paulus Ambunda in Yerevan, set to take place September 3 at the Karen Demirchyan Complex in Armenia. Ambunda, an undefeated 2004 Olympian quarter-finalist out of Nabia, will try to pry away Darchinyan's International Boxing Organization (IBO) 118-pound title.

Darchinyan fans always travel well, so he'll have his legion of friends and family from Armenia – his parents Ruben and Rena live there – Russia, where his wife is from and his adoptive countries of Australia and America – at the fight.

"I appreciate that people say I'm responsible for getting so many Armenians to go to fights in Southern California and other places. But these people are just good boxing fans that like my style and know that I always give my best and put on exciting fights. If they didn't like my style, or I made bad fights, they wouldn't show up," he says.

His promoter, one of boxing's best, adds: "He needs love, and the Armenians give him that love wherever we go. It's a beautiful thing," says Shaw, whose been treated to endless Armenian food and drink every time he's chaperoned Darchinyan to Armenia and abroad. "When I went to Armenia he was extremely protective of me. We have a great relationship together man to man, and not fighter and promoter."

With three career losses to his name, Darchinyan is constantly looking to avenge the blemishes. He says that if he doesn't get a title shot at 118 pounds, he'll move up to 122 or down to 115.

In his 10-year pro career, he has fought as low as 111 pounds (flyweight) and as high as 118 (bantamweight). Being a former 115 pound kingpin and two-division world champion, the hard-hitting Darchinyan has participated in 15 world title fights, and that's all he wants.

"I'd fight anyone in the division today. I'd like to fight Abner Mares. If not, I'll fight Nonito Donaire. If they won't fight me, I'll move up to another division. I'll go fight MMA. I don't care," he says. "I want to challenge for the title. I want a rematch against Mares or Donaire. For Donaire to say he doesn't need to give me a rematch, after I gave him a shot at my title, just shows how much he is afraid of me and doesn't want to fight me."

Darchinyan admits that he underestimated Donaire in his first defeat in 2007, calling it the biggest mistake of his career when he was on the receiving end of a knockout. Mares, who beat Darchinyan with a close and controversial split-decision in 2010, only offered praise for the man 11 years his senior.

"Vic Darchinyan is a great fighter and a tremendous puncher. I thank God that I was able to take his punches in my fight against him. He hits really hard and you feel his power. He's a really determined fighter who never gives up and always throws big blows. He is a great veteran, a great champion and I respect him a lot," Mares tells *Yerevan*.

> Vakhtang Darchinyan has been one of Armenia's most celebrated athletes in the last 10 years. At 35 years old, the four time world champion is still at the top of his game, with no plans of slowing anytime soon.

At 35, Darchinyan is still young in the sport considering the wear and tear on his body, which is minimal at most. He is still a training and physical specimen who hits the gym every day. He runs through torrid Australian heat and effortlessly completes two thousand pushups a day – with his legs mounted on the top of the ring ropes, making it even more grueling.

Oscar De La Hoya, who retired at 35 after losing four of his last seven fights, tells *Yerevan Magazine*, "If it was up to us, we'll continue boxing until we are 60 years old. Boxing is in us, it's a part of us. Vic Darchinyan is a very smart and tough fighter. He still has it in him, and will so for many years."

Says Darchinyan: "I'm not coming just to win the fight; I'm coming to bring excitement. I want to fight the bigger and better guys. I want to fight world champions. I want to prove my point and show everyone how strong I am at the moment. I have my style, I am who I am. I'm just going to show everything in the ring. You're going to see my punches and you're going to hear my punches from now on." With only a handful of marquee fights left to his name, Darchinyan still talks the talk and walks the walk.

"No more showcasing skills and trying to box from now on. Only raging and destroying," he closes.

To the dismay of his opponents and exhilaration of his fans, the Raging Bull can only be tamed for so long. ■



# A Recipe for Television Fame

The recipe for television stardom calls for one part sass, one part beauty, one part talent. Mix it all together and the result is Callie Thorne, the star of *Necessary Roughness*. USA Network's hot new show debuted this summer, losely based on the real life of Dr. Donna Dannenfelsen. Being the star in a show requires a strength of character along with an overabundance of talent, both on display in Thorne's new role. Once an actress in supporting roles, she now is the anchor in a show of her own.

Text **Tamar Kevonian**

Gathering momentum from years of theatre, film and television work, Callie Thorne has finally landed a role seemingly tailor-made for her. *Necessary Roughness* is the much talked about new show that launched in June inspired by the real life of Dr. Donna Dannenfelsen, a Long Island housewife who becomes the long-time therapist for the New York Jets. Thorne stars as psychotherapist Dr. Danielle (Dani) Santino in USA Network's new summer series, whose life unravels after she finds her husband cheating.

The road that eventually led Thorne to *Necessary Roughness* started in Boston while a teenager when she hurt her knee playing soccer. Looking for an extracurricular activity to occupy her while all her athlete friends were busy, she came across the audition notices for that year's high school play. As luck would have it, it was the musical version of her favorite movie at the time – *West Side Story*. Callie believed she was Maria, the young, star-crossed ingénue, but unfortunately the director didn't think so and cast her as Anita instead. "The role itself was by far so much better for me than had I played Maria. It was so much more fiery, and so much more full of emotion," Thorne says. The acting bug bit and Callie decided to become an actress. She attended Wheaton College which had a small theatre department that afforded her the coddling and attention she needed to learn her chosen profession and soon after graduation, in 1991, she headed for New York City.

The road that eventually led Callie Thorne to *Necessary Roughness* started in Boston while a teenager when she hurt her knee playing soccer.

Theatre is not a traditional field for a nice, young Armenian girl to pursue. "My mom was terrified. She really wanted to be supportive because she loved me but was also really scared. She knew that statistically speaking it was going to be really difficult. But then she started coming to see me in the first few years of living here [New York]. She would come to everything... she became my biggest fan and she started to believe in me, sometimes more than I believed in myself," remembers Callie, "When I was eating one meal at McDonald's and walking dogs, and working at a tanning salon and trying to waitress and getting fired, I would call and say 'maybe I made a mistake.'" Her mother knew better. With her knowledge of astrology and her belief in her daughter's future potential, she encouraged Callie to stick it out.

In the early years, Thorne did a lot of free theatre, acting for the experience rather than the money. She hit her groove when she started working with the Naked Angels Theatre Company, a non-profit theatre started as a collaboration between writers, directors and actors that expanded to include "Naked Radio" on NPR and "Naked TV" on Fox Broadcasting. She was also involved with Malaparte, a now defunct theatre company started by Ethan Hawke. These forays in the New York theatre world helped her hone her craft and soon there were guest-starring roles on television on shows such as *The Wire, Law and Order: Special Victim's Unit, Prison Break* and *Law and Order: Criminal Intent, White Collar, Burn Notice* and most recently, *Californication.* ▸

Thorne's first big television break came with her role on *Homicide: Life on the Street* where she played Detective Ballard, an edgy, boundary-pushing role and one of the only two women on the show. She received a lot of fan mail from college-age women who were interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement. "Just watching the show, it was making them feel positive about the life choices they wanted to make," says Thorne.

Her next big break was with *Rescue Me*, a show that centers on the inner workings of Engine 62, a New York City firehouse, and the personal and emotional battles of its members in a post-9/11 world, starring Dennis Leary. There was a greater sense of gratification with the role of Sheila, one of the 9/11 widows who is an excitable, energetic and highly sexual character. "The response was...interesting," she says of the fan feedback, "because, whether they like the show or not, or whether they like my character or not, I've had some incredible conversations with these widows that ranged in positivity." The response was very generational with older widows of victims taken aback by the sexual escapades of Sheila, whereas the younger widows loved being portrayed with the full range of emotions of their experience. "They loved the firecracker, cranky, saying what you want, doing what you want [character] and showing parts of the journey of being a widow."

Sheila is Thorne's longest running recurring role, as *Rescue Me* begins its final season this summer. Getting the part was a result of hard work, persistence, talent and missed opportunities. Thorne had auditioned for another role on ABC and made the short list for the role opposite Dennis Leary, but it ultimately went to Diane Farr. A few years later she was called to audition for the pilot episode of *Rescue Me*, a show from the same creators and executive producers.

Again, the role went to another actress. "The feedback came back that they loved me, but that they really were looking for a much more Irish looking woman. That was really the vision that Dennis Leary and Peter Tolen had for this long suffering wife," says Callie, "I sort of took that in stride. I was sad; I wanted to work with Dennis." Hope springs eternal so she was excited when a short time later she received a call for the re-occurring role of Sheila. Says Callie, "They had, thankfully, remembered me... I felt I was on the same page with this group, in terms of their humor, their ideas about character. I crossed every finger and toe because I wanted to get [the role] so badly." All the toe crossing, along with the hard work, paid off and she got the part. Things went so well for those three short episodes that she was written into all the episodes of the season and then was offered a contract for the second season. "It's the best job I've ever had. It's the most fun I've ever had," gushes Callie. She describes working with Leary as a "delight" and Leary personally as "edgy," "intense" and "funny."

In the early years Thorne did a lot of free theatre, acting for the experience rather than the money.

An actor's work is bringing to life characters written on a page and making them believable as people. In this case, Thorne portrayed Sheila as being bi-polar and manic-depressive. This characteristic was not written as part of the role but Thorne considers it integral to her interpretation of Sheila who she calls "an extremist with no boundaries." There are no limits to Sheila's range and that keeps it exciting for Thorne. She says, "Each week that I read the script my mouth would be hanging open... and it was up to me to really make it an honest journey."



**Callie Thorne**
Born Calliope Thorne on November 20, 1969, the spunky actress was dubbed "Callie" long before she arrived in New York City to make her mark as a thespian.

Although Callie and her characters are worlds apart, the actress uses some of her own traits to flesh out her portrayal of them. For example, she believes that Sheila is a Scorpio, has a quick temper, and experiences jealousy, just like her, but that they both get through the day with laughter. The similarities end there. Most of Thorne's roles tend to be sassy, sexy women. Besides the fiery sex scenes on *Rescue Me*, she most recently slipped between the sheets with David Duchovny in *Californication*. We all know that these are characters on TV, but how do you explain to your grandmother the steamy sex scenes and the bruising fights? "At first my grandmother was like 'let me know when the sex scenes come up and I'll go make a pot of coffee.'" Still, the shows managed to walk the fine line between risqué and obscene and getting their point by developing their characters with humor. It is the overriding factor in scenes that may make most people accept what is on screen, including grandmothers who squirm in their easy chairs.

The role of Dr. Dani Santino is somewhat different both in texture and context. Unlike her other parts, it is based on a real person. Although she didn't have to do much research on Dr. Donna Dannenfelsen to flesh out the character of Dani, Thorne found that she mostly wanted to convey the spirit of

Donna because she believe that it's what made Dannenfelsen extraordinary. "It's still very important to me that I represent her in the right way.

Craig Shapiro, co-creator and writer for *Necessary Roughness*, says that while writing the show, he picked Callie's as the voice of the character long before they began casting. "I never thought she would be it," he says still surprised by the happy result. It was not a straightforward process. When Shapiro and the rest of the producers finally got around to casting the show, they discovered that Thorne was committed to another show. Several months into the process Callie's other commitment never materialized and she was suddenly available for *Necessary Roughness*, much to the producers' delight. "She is the whole package," says Shapiro, "she's sexy, she's funny, she's tough, she's empathic, she's very smart and she's believably from Long Island," Shapiro says, listing all the qualities they wanted to also see in the character of Dani. "The role has turned out to be exactly what I imagined it would be."

The New York theatre scene is a relatively tight knit community and it includes another notable Armenian actor: Eric Boghossian. In such an environment it was inevitable that these two Armenians would eventually work together, as it happened with a production of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. Callie's fascination with Boghossian began while she was in college and with this production she got her chance to not only meet him but also to work with him. "I was excited and nervous to read with him and be sitting next to him," gushes Callie, "and he turned to me and said 'I'm a huge fan of yours because I am obsessed with *The Wire*.'" This stunned the usually vivacious actress into verbal paralysis. She describes her experience of working with the well-respected thespian as "pretty tremendous" and believes that they both being Armenian created a small spiritual connection.

Thorne's family took a circuitous route from Historic Armenia to Hartford, Connecticut. Like many, her great-grandmother was born in the homeland and left with her family in 1892 for Cyprus. In 1912 the family relocated again, this time to Connecticut, first to New Britain and eventually to Hartford. Her great-grandfather was not as lucky. He only escaped after losing his parents and was brought to New Britain by his uncle.

Growing up in an ethnic household was difficult. Like many, she attempted to keep her two worlds apart. Armenian at home, American at school. She spent a lot of energy trying to fit in. "I was engulfed with a lot of soccer moms and PTA meetings and blond and blue eyed school mates," laments Thorne, "Somewhere in mid-high school it dawned on me that I was really excited to be different. I think it had a lot do with my mom and my grandparents. I started to really embrace my curly hair and my darker skin." She accepted her unique look and it has served her well in her career. "When I had decided I wanted to be an actress, I felt very lucky that I was different" says Callie. Her family history, cultural influences, along with the closeness of her family has contributed greatly to the characters she's portrayed on screen. "It has to do with having strength because of our history and because of the enormous amount of affection that I felt... that sort of open affection and real love of family that I didn't see as much in the friends that I grew up with,"




observes Thorne. Whether or not the roles are tragic characters or comedic characters, she believes that "the sort of great, loving, compassionate, very spiritual, ethnic part of my makeup has a lot to with why I've been able to sort of succeed."

What's next for this dynamic actress? Callie Thorne likes to keep busy by shooting *Necessary Roughness* during the season while looking for other projects during hiatus. Up till now, these have included recurring roles on small budget independent films like *David and Layla*, *Welcome to Academia*, *Nice Guy Johnny* and *Meet My Boyfriend!!!* currently in post production and set to release later this year.

Occasionally scheduling conflicts prevent her from accepting a role like that of a Puerto Rican lap dancer in Amy Sedaris' movie. But she did accept a smaller part in the film that, unfortunately, ended up on the cutting room floor. "There is a saying that you're not a real actor unless you've been fired at least once and ended up on the cutting room floor. I'll be fine if I just end up on the cutting room floor and never get fired," she says with a laugh.

Besides spending time with her terrier and playing the guitar, Callie's other downtime hobby is writing her book. She has a certain fascination with thrillers and murder mysteries and enjoys watching investigative crime shows. She finds it really relaxing to read a mystery and try to work through the puzzle. She's now inspired to write her own. She claims, "It's a challenge to figure out how to write a story from A to Z. To figure out how to put in the clues from the murder to the arrest – it's so hard but it's my favorite thing to do right now."

Callie Thorne is an actress in demand and considering her busy work schedule with a brand new show, it's highly doubtful she'll ever have time to work out the intricacies of her murder mystery novel. ■



# The Art of Daydreaming

Aram Bedrossian's photography tells a story without words – it can bring to mind an R&B musician wandering around Central Park, the curiosity behind a supermodel's bewildering gaze, or a couple's love affair in a '60s American crime film. It was nearly two years ago that he graduated with a biology degree from in his hometown of San Francisco and made the spontaneous decision to move to New York, the city saturated in fashion, to follow his dreams. With an affinity towards fashion photography and directing, Bedrossian's most important role is that of a proactive dreamer.

Text **Maria Kevorkian**

At 22, the multi-talented Bedrossian has an impressive portfolio with some of music's biggest names, and is amongst the young emerging talents of the fashion industry – and he's just getting started.

While most fashion photographers during Fashion Week capture photos of stylish women brimming the streets of New York City in their vertiginously high stilettos, Aram Bedrossian chooses to experience it to the fullest – without a camera. Bedrossian identifies himself as an artist who appreciates beautiful things, and fashion is just one of them. Carrying a camera would have unleashed an "artistic Aram," one who obsesses with composition and capturing moments instead of freely absorbing the spectacular energy of people and his surroundings.

The essence of daydreaming is the subconscious pathway to creativity – unedited, and in the moment. It was in fall of 2010 when I came across Aram Bedrossian's photography while rummaging through a list of fashion blogs. "Links of love" as I like to call them, and I was lured by his Armenian name from the photography credit. His first fashion editorial, *Bonnie and Clyde*, received great hype all over the blogosphere and was my first impression of Bedrossian's craft as a storyteller with no words. Curiosity then led to my discovery of an array of raw creativity behind his blog, "The Art of Daydreaming." Bedrossian's resume includes shooting for *V Magazine*, *Utopia NYC*, *Love Cat Magazine*, working with the likes of David Sims, a fashion photography giant, and various supermodels, just to name a few. Aram has also worked with world famed recording artists which include Usher, Fabolous, and Jared Leto's band, 30 Seconds to Mars. But I was mainly struck by his versatile ability to capture mundane nuances in a charming manner. From snapping photographs of up-and-coming models in New York to ordinary people roaming the streets of Paris, Bedrossian's dreamy images breathe life in every form. "A portrait is only as powerful as its subject," he says, having introduced "The Art of Daydreaming," a dreamer's outlet where fashion, photography, music, and film converge into one; a fusion of pure daydreams, if you will. A romantic with just enough edge, Bedrossian has the voice and charismatic manner that mirror the ambitious voice in his writing. He explains that although everybody has dreams, which originate from desires, they can only become realized if pursued. Aram inserts his signature phrase, "Never underestimate the power of daydreaming" at the end of each blog post, which implies the inherent energy that one possesses to chase a daydream – without curbing imagination and fear of failure. "Unless a person allows themselves to dream without barrier and make themselves completely vulnerable to the potentially detrimental consequences of chasing the impossible, they will never know how high their daydreaming could have flown them; worse yet, they will forfeit the opportunity to ever feel the untouchable. This basic but powerful idea inspired me to coin the brand, "The Art of Daydreaming," which encourages people to be 'proactive dreamers' and utilize the power of a dream to drive them toward grasping all of their desires," says the



Each opportunity is seen as a catalyst to growth, as he pursues the offers that will both catapult his career, and satisfy his artistic taste.

New York City resident, who has wanted to work in the creative industry since the tender age of 12.

"My parents were always strict but fair, which I am eternally thankful for. My father taught me how to work hard and stay focused and my mother taught me that I could do anything I set my mind to. They are also the most loving, nurturing, and giving parents I know and I appreciate them more than they'll ever know – until they read this interview," he says coyly.

Aram emulates hard work from his parents and often emphasizes that, "Nothing is more important than family." In his documentary, *Life in Daydream*, which was submitted to a Sundance competition, he gives viewers a glimpse of a day's work in New York along with family dynamics revolving around his career choices. The biology degree was out of respect and love for his parents, explains Aram, who possesses just as much knowledge as passion for anything he sets his mind to. Bedrossian mentions that his career path has always been a struggle with his parents. "The most inspirational and powerful words they relay to me are, 'you can do it Aram' from my mom, and 'I'm so proud of you Aram Jan' from my dad. Those words make a world of difference." ▸



Aram's whole-hearted determination is a prime reason for his early splash and success. *Bonnie and Clyde* serves as his big break in editorial, and was created in an "unorthodox manner" by finding the models prior to a theme and location. "As a lover of vintage clothing and the swagger of Roaring 20s America, I chose the infamous Bonnie and Clyde as the inspiration for my second fashion story," he says of the editorial, which took place in the East Hamptons and also showcases Bedrossian's cinematic taste.

Moving to the epicenter of the fashion world, an arena filled with daydreamers, means one must be a "doer," according to Bedrossian. When it comes to his work, Bedrossian gives credit to his mentors, Taj Stansberry, Ryan Leslie, and Carolyn Bodner, each who have influenced him with a specific role. "My first and most prominent mentor, the man who sparked my interest in photography and directing, is Taj Stansberry," he says, a most sought after music video directors in the industry, having directed videos for Rihanna's *Don't Stop the Music*, and Jennifer Lopez' *On the Floor*. In the summer of 2009, Bedrossian interned as the sound engineer for the documentary, *My Fabolous Life: The Diary of John Jackson*, directed by Stransberry. At that point, Bedrossian's only goal was to become a music producer.

While documentaries tell a person's everyday life on a more personal and visual level, films exaggerate and romanticize everyday life. Clearly intrigued by them, Bedrossian mentions that "films also allow the filmmaker to wander beyond the limits of 'real life.'"

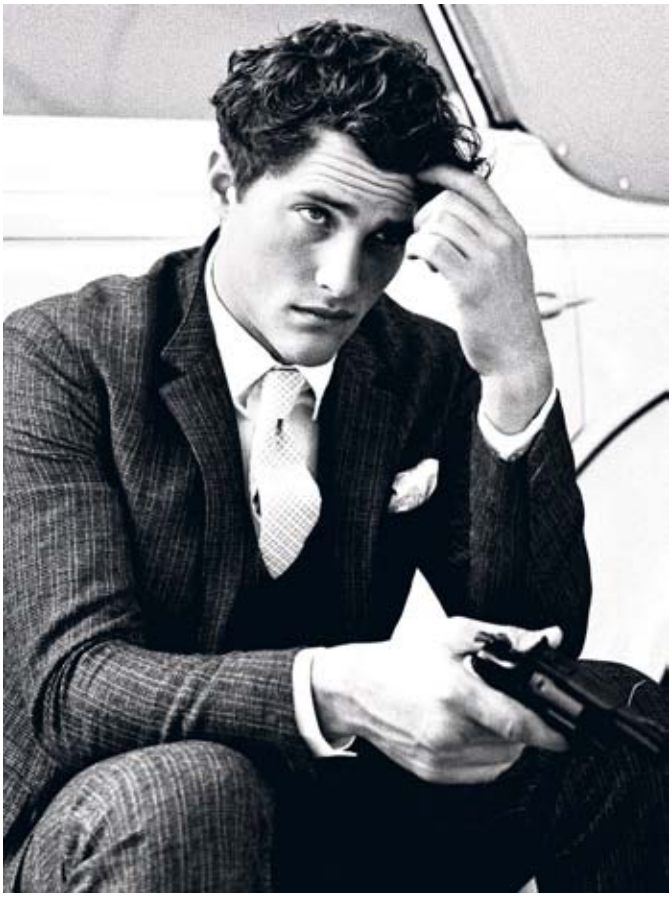
While photographer, designer, and model make a brand what it is, photographs are the ultimate medium for recording fashion. Bedrossian explains, "each brand 'brands' themselves through their advertisements, which are realized by the designer, photographer and model. Therefore, since the image and message of a brand relies on its photographic campaign, the photographer and designer play extremely important roles for a brand."

Amongst his favorite photographers are Steven Meisel, Patrick Demarchelier, Josh Olins, Tim Walker, and Annie Liebowitz. Fashion photography allows him to daydream about a photographic world filled with whimsical subjects; but nothing inspires Bedrossian more than the beauty of real people, in real places, doing real things. "While photographing strangers on the street, I usually go for the homeless, or people with interesting garb or facial features. I choose people that 'have stories written on their face' so to speak…they have to be special." He emphasizes that every photograph captures a single moment in time, and more specifically, a portrait taken at whim, captures that particular person's being and essence at that very moment. Some pictures tell vivid stories, while others leave you



**Aram Bedrossian**

Bedrossian was raised in a family of four in San Francisco. Baptized Armenian Orthodox, Aram and his older brother were raised by his father, an oral surgeon, and mother, who is Chinese. Aram attended Krouzian-Zekarian-Vasbouragan Elementary School.






> "Every person captured in every photograph is frozen in that day forever, each with their own plans, worries and hopes"

questioning its inspiration. Bedrossian's imagination fills in the blanks with questions including, what story lives in this photograph? Where is the man in the foreground headed? Is he late for the job interview that changed his life, or just walking to a cafe for a double espresso on a lazy Sunday afternoon? He especially loves photographs that simply suggest a story, allowing the imagination of its viewers to solve its mystery. Photography has also given Bedrossian a chance to travel to Europe and marvel at the architecture, culture, and style. "Europe's beauty makes my mind race wild when I'm there. The architecture, the way people dress, the cobblestone... everything about Europe lends itself to be photographed and/or filmed. It's so serene compared to New York... so romantic," he says.

Working with an impressive line of artists and creative individuals has taught Bedrossian to not only perfect his craft, but gain helpful experience. The most memorable moment at a photo shoot occurred during his interning days while working on an online commercial for recording artist Usher. Photographing portraits of the R&B star, they would shoot all night:

"As I started to develop a rapport with Usher and his manager, I thought it would be okay to touch some of the clothes on Usher's styling rack... it wasn't. Within a few minutes, Taj took me aside and said, 'I'm sorry Aram, but you have to leave. Grace (Usher's manager/girlfriend) does not like you! You have to wait in the lobby.' The moment Taj uttered those words we both began laughing hysterically; we were a couple of laid back artists from the Bay area, dealing with NY music industry personalities... it's definitely a moment I'll never forget."

Although he seldom finds leisure time, he spends it catching up on his other passions, directing and music production. When he finishes an editorial, Bedrossian will most likely be making music or studying film. He tells me that amongst his favorite places to grab dinner and drinks with friends is Anthony Bourdain's French restaurant, Les Halles and Chris Santiago's tapas restaurant, The Stanton Social.

Each opportunity is seen as a catalyst to growth, as Aram pursues the offers that will both catapult his career and satisfy his artistic taste and passion. When Aram speaks about his professional dreams transforming in to a reality, he mentions that success is two-fold in that it is both material and mental. Professional success to him would be defined as consistently shooting for top fashion magazines like *Vogue*, *Numero*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. Success is also having the opportunity to collaborate with the most brilliant minds, artists, and leave a mark in the art world. "But to be truly successful, I would have to simultaneously enjoy life, find a balance between work, love and family, stay grounded, have peace of mind, and ultimately be happy," he says, truly showcasing the power of proactive daydreaming. ■

# The Perfect Stranger



The public usually cares less about the people who are behind the scene of successful rock/pop acts. Fans are obsessed with their idols, their lifestyle, and only a few know that more than half of the artists' success belongs to an endless collective effort of tens, perhaps hundreds of specialists of different calibers. And most of them don't even know how to play an instrument. Our interviewee is well known in the music industry – mainly in the classic rock scene. He has "escorted" many (now) famous bands/artists to their stardom. Throughout the 80s and 90s, Bob Nalbandian was a contributing editor to several well known international music publications including *Creem*, *Music Connection*, *Hit Parader*, *BAM*, *Foundations*, *Loud*, *Metal Rendezvous*, *BURRN*! (Japan), and *Rock Hard* (Germany).

Text **Khachatur Melekyan** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**



I was standing in line at a local post office when I realized that the person behind me looked familiar. "Excuse me, sir, is your last name Nalbandian?" I asked, quickly regretting the eruption of my sudden initiative displayed to this stranger. "Have we met before?" was the response. I knew him from the podcasts that a friend had introduced me to. His reviews of classic and modern Rock artists had always touched my curiosity – another "ian" in the music industry, whose reviews were cleverly built, and his radio shows were unconventionally tactful for the genre of music that some (mistakenly) consider non-classy. "I eagerly await your podcasts, I heard your most recent program with Graham Bonnet (Rainbow, MSG, Alcatrazz). So many revealing details about one of my favorite singers!" I informed him. "It is a pleasure to meet a fan of your craft" was the expression on his face, but he hardly realized then that he was being surreptitiously drawn into an interview himself. "Can we have a cup of coffee and chat?" I asked. Little did I know that our unexpected encounter would turn into a friendship. A second generation American, Bob Nalbandian started his career in the music business at the age of 18, as founder-publisher of the seminal heavy metal fanzine *The Headbanger*. It was a nationally distributed xeroxed publication which featured articles and interviews of local and international heavy metal bands, including the very first profiles of the then-unsigned bands Metallica, Slayer and Megadeth. Nalbandian is officially credited for writing the first article on Metallica in the Time-Warner book *Metallica Unbound*.

Bob Nalbandian's articles were highly regarded by the music industry; later he himself became part of the industry when he was actively involved as the west coast director of publicity, radio and retail promotion for Roadrunner and its affiliated labels. He worked closely with many of the label's cutting-edge artists of the time, including Sepultura, Type-O Negative, and Last Crack.

After Roadrunner, Nalbandian went on to Bizarre/Straight Records to assist president Herb Cohen. Herb, who co-founded the label with Frank Zappa back in the late sixties, revamped the record label in the early nineties. Their roster specialized in diverse, seemingly bizarre artists such as Alice Cooper, Ted Nugent, Captain Beefheart, Tim Buckley, Lenny Bruce, Screaming Jay Hawkins and Tom Waits. Bob has worked as director of press, A&R, radio and retail promotion for both catalog and current rock releases for the Rhino/WEA distributed label. My new acquaintance was also the publisher/editor of the nationally distributed music publication *Shockwaves* in the mid-90s, which featured a wide range of interviews from baseball all-star Mike Piazza to acclaimed musical artists Ozzy Osbourne, Ice-T, and Van Halen, and associate editor for the national men's magazines *Platinum* and *Men's Perspective*. ▸

**Bob Nalbandian**
Nalbandian is the current VP of Press and Publicity for HardRadio – a top-rated Internet radio station where he is also the editor of *Shockwaves Magazine On-line*, which includes the Shockwaves/HardRadio podcast that features interviews with some of the biggest performers in the hard rock scene. He also hosts the widely popular Shockwaves Skullsessions Podcast for Roadrunner Records. Most of the artists Bob Nalbandian has interviewed were in the heavy rock genre and included everyone from Ozzy Osborne and other members of Black Sabbath, Rob Halford of Judas Priest, Ronnie James Dio, various members of Deep Purple and Rainbow, and Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley from KISS.



**Who was your most memorable guest of the sessions?**
I would have to say Ronnie James Dio; he was my first major interview. This was back in 1983 when I was 18 years old, and I was publishing a small heavy metal fanzine. I met Ronnie at The Country Club, an old live music venue in Reseda, CA. I believe it was during the debut Alcatrazz show. I went over to meet Ronnie and told him that he was my favorite vocalist and loved his work with Rainbow and Black Sabbath. I proceeded to give him a copy of my fanzine and asked if he would consider doing an interview for such a small publication. He gave me his home phone number and told me that he would be more than happy to do it and said to give him a call anytime to arrange an interview. I called him the very next day and he invited me to his home in Tarzana. After the interview he showed me old pictures of him with Rainbow and Black Sabbath and showed me rough footage videos he had shot with his new solo band DIO. I hung out at his house for nearly three hours!

**Do you have any memorable experience connected with a Rock star?**
Well, apart from the Dio interview, I would have to mention the Gene Simmons "experience" I encountered back in 1994 for a national men's magazine. What was supposed to be a 45 minute interview turned into a two and a half-hour discussion! Gene just kept babbling on and on and I didn't have the courage to tell him that it was getting late, and the people in the office need to lock up and go home. In the end, I practically had to kick Gene out of the office.
**Classic Rock is not as popular here in America as it is in other parts of the world. Which is the most rock friendly territory?**
I'm not so sure. I think classic rock, particularly classic hard rock and heavy metal, is probably the most universal of any music genre. Bands such as Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, AC/DC, Iron Maiden and Metallica have performed in practically every country and continent in the world. Classic hard rock music is huge all over Eastern Europe, Asia, Australia, South America, and many of these bands easily sell out 60,000–100,000 person stadiums in those territories. As far as the US, I would say the Midwest region is a lot more prone to be more into classic rock than, say, the major metropolitan cities.
**Bob, I know you are a big fan of Ian Gillan. How did you meet with one of the best friends to the Armenian people?**
The Gillan interview was back in 1998 for my *Shockwaves Magazine* site on HardRadio.com. It was actually my associate, John Strednansky, who did the interview since Deep Purple was his all-time favorite band, so I offered the "gig" to him. The two of us met with Ian Gillan at the Cat & Fiddle pub in Hollywood; nobody there recognized Ian, so the three of us talked Deep Purple over a few pints of beer for well over an hour. Ian Gillan is one of the most humble artists you can ever meet, and one of the most legendary vocalists in rock 'n' roll. He is incredibly underrated as a vocalist and lyricist, especially here in the U.S. where he is mainly known for recording the song "Smoke On The Water." His solo band in

Throughout the years, Bob Nalbandian has managed and counseled many rock bands, acquiring license/distribution deals with several international record companies such as Century Media (Germany/US), Enigma/Restless (US), Roadrunner (Europe/Japan), JVC/Victor (Japan), Music For Nations (UK), Bandai/Apollon (Japan), Jigu (Korea), Polystar (Japan), Rising Sun (Germany), High Vaultage (Germany), and Dream Circle/Polydor (Germany), Reality/Sony (Europe).

the eighties, simply called Gillan, released several brilliant albums that were sadly overlooked and of course the *Born Again* album he recorded with Black Sabbath is a classic. He still performs and records incredible music with Deep Purple. Ian is also one of the greatest humanitarians in the music business, especially when it comes to supporting Armenia. He was one of the very few entertainers that organized a major benefit for the people of Armenia back in 1988 after the devastating earthquake and continues to support and raise funds for Armenians today. As you know, Ian Gillan and Tony Iommi (Black Sabbath) recently collaborated on a musical project called "WhoCares" and recorded two songs in which 100 percent of the proceeds will help rebuild a music school in Gyumri. The two songs, "Out Of My Mind" and "Holy Water" are out of this world.

[Our conversation takes a turn into discussing some of our favorite bands. Like most Armenian rock fans, Bob Nalbandian is a huge follower of Deep Purple and Ritchie Blackmore. He specifically mentions Black Sabbath, both the Ozzy and Dio era, as well as Led Zeppelin, Judas Priest, AC/DC and UFO to be his favorites. We discuss the current crisis in the music industry, where the conventional norms are swept away, and new ones are being charted.]

**Bob, is this the end of the industry as we know it?**

There have been a lot of changes in the industry, for sure. I honestly don't think a lot of labels know what lies in the future of selling and producing new music; they're just going at it day by day, trying to keep up with technology. To be honest, I saw this coming several years ago and I think the music industry is largely to blame for the overabundance of free downloading. I remember back in the mid to late nineties, before the mp3 phenomenon, record stores were selling CDs for nearly 20 bucks each, which would cost the label roughly 30 cents to manufacture! Of course, the record label earned the biggest slice of the pie and the artist was lucky if they were to make 10 percent of the profit or 5 percent for a new band. The fans felt like they were getting ripped off, which in reality they were. When you look back it's kind of funny how the entire industry went up in arms against the original Napster when it was created and introduced file sharing to the music buying public. And nowadays it's the norm for fans to obtain free music on demand from "legitimate" sources such as YouTube and Pandora. The technology was there and the demand was unstoppable. But I think old-timers like myself in their forties-plus really enjoy the physical product of CDs or even vinyl, for that matter. And I'm noticing more and more record labels are finding some of their biggest selling artists nowadays are the classic rock bands, simply because the fans of that genre will generally still go out and buy a CD or purchase a digital download, whereas many of the young music fans today literally don't even know what a CD is as they exclusively download mp3s for free.

**And what strategy should the emerging artists employ?**

Well, obviously the Internet has made things incredibly easy for new artists to expose their music on an international level at basically no cost to them. Social networks have become a great source for artists and bands to post and make their music and/or videos available to the masses. The problem is the fact that anyone with a computer is capable of doing this, which leads to oversaturation. But if the music is good, it generally will get noticed. Nowadays, most new bands are giving away their music for free and relying on their live shows and merchandise sales as means of profiting financially. And this has become commonplace for a lot of labels now who are offering what they call "360 deals" to new artists, where the labels earn a piece of the artists profits from touring, merchandise etc. as well as CD and digital download sales. But I think for any new artist, it's best to do everything you can on your own and have as much control as possible on your art.

**Please tell us about your family. Where are your ancestors from?**

I am a second generation American, both my parents are Armenian, but born here in the U.S. My mother is from Troy, NY and my father – from Fresno, CA. My grandparents lived in Beirut, Lebanon. They escaped the Genocide. Both grandparents came to the US at an early age. I was born and raised in Los Angeles and Orange County, CA. I have an older brother and a younger sister.

**What brought you to music journalism?**

I really got inspired by rock music journalism after reading a lot of the British magazines of the early eighties, particularly when the hard rock music magazine *Kerrang*! first started. I think the British music journalists at the time were much bigger fans of the music whereas many of the US journalists wrote mainly to please themselves; it was more of an ego thing for them, and still is in many cases. One of my favorite US journalists is Jon Sutherland; he wrote for a small national magazine called *Record Review* back in the mid-seventies on through the early eighties. He was one of the first US journalists to cover major features on then emerging hard rock bands like Thin Lizzy, AC/DC, Scorpions, UFO, and Iron Maiden on a national level.

**Bob, have you considered traveling to Armenia?**

Absolutely. I have yet to visit but hope to make it to Armenia someday soon.

**What is your favorite Armenian food?**

I can't think of an Armenian dish I haven't liked. I love dolma and kofte, but nothing beats Armenian shish kabob! ■

# Characteristics of the Traditional Armenian Wedding

Armenian weddings did not last for seven days and seven nights as it is usually said. In fact, they lasted much longer than that. And this is not including the prenuptial rituals, starting with courtship. Each ritual was performed with absolute meticulousness, as newly-married couples in those days were very sensitive to the forces of evil. The participants headed by a *Խavor*, the godfather, were called to protect the young couple's future family life.
From the vast number of wedding traditions performed during various periods and in various regions of Armenia, we have chosen some of the most important as well as interesting ones.

Text **Yeva Kochikyan** | Photo **Arnos Martirosyan** | Consultant **Gayane Shagoyan** | Stylist **Elina Gziryan**
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Courtship was generally the man's job. Visits were paid in the evening so that none of the neighbors would know, and to avoid any possible "bad publicity" for the groom in case of a rejection. Consent after just one visit from the matchmaker was not allowed because it would imply that the bride had faults and her father wanted to get rid of her. A special linguistic code existed to deal with these delicate matters. If the matchmaker was told that "We still need to think about this. Besides, the decisions in the family are made by our uncle and he is out of town," it was a rejection that after a couple of visits could turn into consent. However, an excuse such as "they are too young" meant that paying a second visit was useless. There were many ways to justify real and mock refusals. If there were several candidates asking for the girl's hand in marriage, they could come to a mutual agreement and show up at the girl's house at the same time. Men around the table presented various gifts to the bride. She expressed her liking with gestures. At times, the bashful bride would choose a gift without knowing its giver, and so the groom was drawn at random. More clever girls managed to come to an agreement with the young man they were attracted to, and would confidently choose the gift brought by him. The agreement between the father of the bride and the groom was supposed to take place before the engagement.



The matchmakers' third visit, in case of successful negotiations, would turn into a betrothal (*khoskkap* – literally "to tighten the word"). From that day on until the wedding, the bride was not allowed to meet with her husband-to-be. The yearning groom had to secretly get into his fiancée's house in order to see her. The bride's mother would accept the future groom behind her husband's back on the condition that he would keep his distance and under no circumstances touch the girl. In some regions, in the event that the groom stayed the night, he was even allowed to lie next to the bride. But the condition of not touching her was unshakable. Unlike the mothers, every self-respecting father during that time would have been infuriated upon learning that the groom had tried to sneak into his house before the wedding. However, sometimes the father of the bride who remembered himself being in that situation pretended that he hadn't noticed the future groom sneaking in through the window or the *yerdik* (an opening in the ceiling functioning as a chimney and a source of light in country houses).

The betrothal was followed by the engagement, taking place at the bride's house. The groom's side would always bring a gift for the bride, but the tradition of diamond engagement rings didn't come into existence until the second half of the 20th century.



The bride had to appear at the ceremony wearing the attire that the groom's side had prepared for her. In the presence of women at home, the relatives of the groom and the two friends of the bride headed by the godmother, the bride was stripped down to her skin and dressed in the new attire. She was dressed by one of the young married relatives with a first-born son.

One of the most important parts of the rite was changing the maiden hairstyle, which was one or more braids, to two braids. And from that day on the girl did not have the right to leave the house with her head uncovered. In many other cultures, denudation symbolizes death, which is what makes the basis of the dressing ritual. The girl had to be put to death symbolically to then be revived into the groom's family as a woman. Today this ritual has practically become obsolete as the bride is already dressed at the time of the groom's arrival and is solemnly presented the veil, gloves and shoes. This tradition had a dual purpose. Besides dressing up the bride, the relatives of the groom had an opportunity to examine and appraise the physical features of the newest addition to their family to make sure that she didn't have any hidden flaws.



In order to ward off evil spirits, participants of the wedding procession would sing songs, dance, and fire shots in the air on their way to church. Women sang congratulatory songs in honor of the bride during the entire ceremony. Musicians walked ahead of the procession, the groom, accompanied by the godfather and *azabbashi* (his unmarried friend) followed, and the bride after them. The bride's girlfriend or brother carried the hem of his attire holding it to the bride's chest, and no one could pass between the bride and groom so as not to break the bond between them. In the church the priest performed the wedding ceremony and tied the *narot* (interwoven red and green threads, sometimes with a cross) on the bride and groom's necks, hands or foreheads, tightening the ends with wax. The procession would take a different route home from the church in order to trick the evil spirits. Relatives of the newlyweds would take trays full of gifts into the streets, laying them on the tables. Three to seven days after the ceremony, the crown removal ritual was performed: the priest came to the couple's house, put the bride and the groom on their knees facing each other so that their heads touched, read prayers and removed the *narot*. At the same time, the red and green ribbons on the wedding tree were cut and all the fruits and sweets removed from it. It was only after that the young couple could retreat to the wedding bed.



The wedding had to be fun. For that reason, wedding rituals were mixed with carnival games. One of these games played out in the yard of the groom's house. The groom's parents would start a play fight in which the woman was always the winner and the young groom would help her defeat her husband. In the fight, the groom's father was literally thrown on his back and the winner, his wife, was placed on top of him. Everyone would laugh loudly, for it was thought that there was nothing more unbelievable than a wife who defeated her husband. They also sang joking songs. For example, in reference to the mother of the groom they would sing about how the young bride will help her mother-in-law clean, cook and do housework, and also receive beatings. Today, this ritualistic game is practically forgotten, and even when it is performed, the spouses imitate the battle after which the wife kisses her husband on his cheek because the one who kisses is considered the winner. However, a tradition that is preserved is one where the mother of the groom meets the newly married couple with bread and covers their shoulders with *lavash* (Armenian flat bread). Also, sweets, grain, and coins symbolizing well-being and wealth were thrown at the young couple from the roof of the house.



A lavish table and generous treats were not only the signs of a cheerful wedding, but also a matter of honor for the parents, the groom's family in particular. Thus, the question was treated with utmost significance. First, the honorable elderly men with impressive experience in organizing feasts were chosen from both sides, and they had to count how much food and drinks would be needed. The groom's side had to provide the bride's family with everything needed for the preparation of the feast, not only during the wedding but also during the engagement. On average, one sheep, one pound of grains, 10 pounds of butter, eight bottles of vodka, and 60 to 70 bottles of wine were spent on an engagement according to records. The wedding itself required three to four pounds more. The *tamada* (master of ceremonies) with accomponying musicians was responsible for putting guests in a good mood.

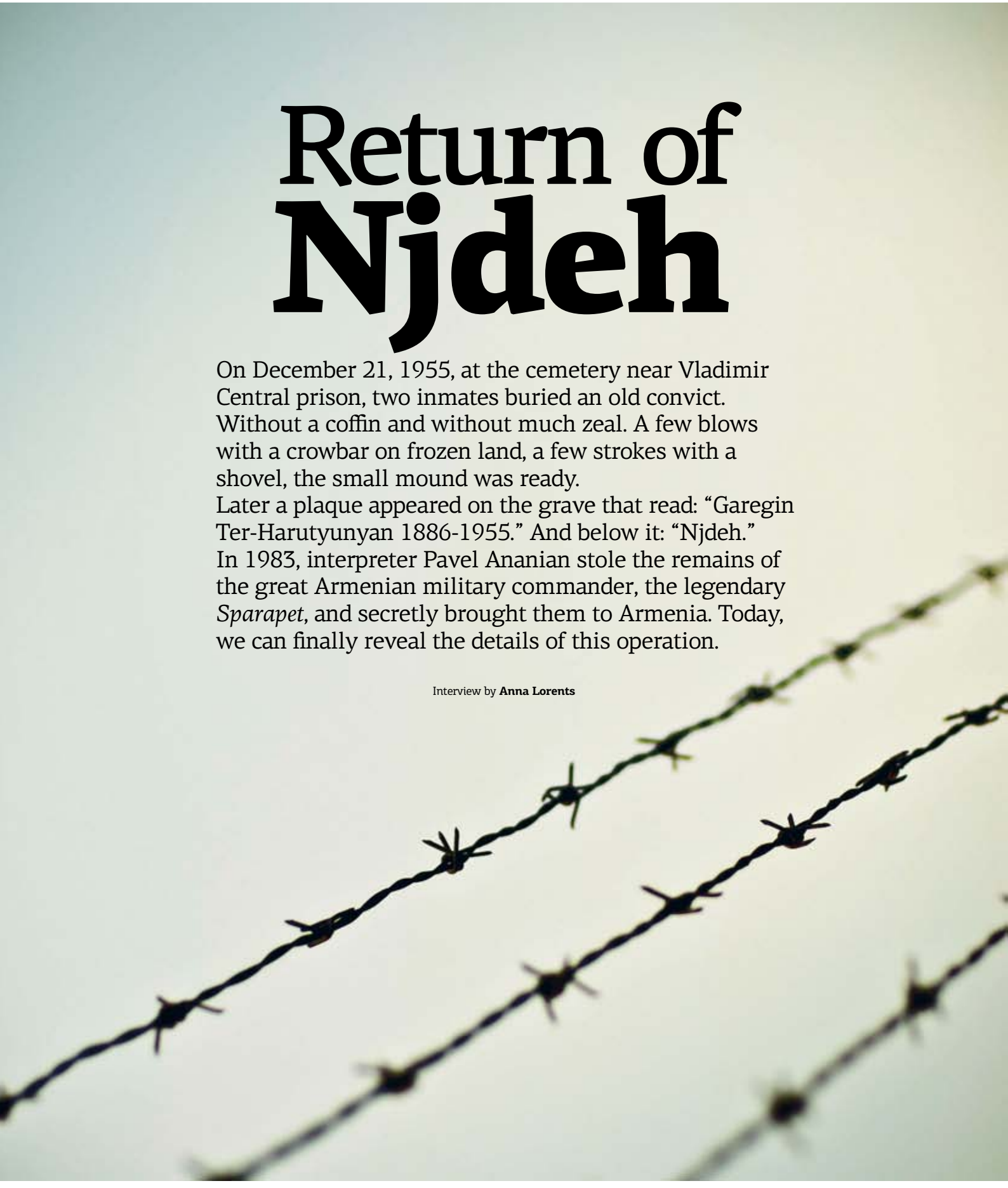


The institution of preserving virginity has existed in Armenian culture from time immemorial, and there is a rational explanation for it. The husband, as well as his relatives, had to be sure that the first-born was their descendant. Due to the nonexistence of DNA analysis, the only way to be sure was through the virginity of the bride. The red apple ritual, which many think of as one of the most ancient rituals, actually came into existence during the Soviet era. The morning after the first wedding night, the bride's mother was sent red apples and a bottle of cognac tied with a red ribbon to signify the innocence of the bride. In the old days, the bride's older, married girlfriend, or the cook, would stand behind the door during the wedding night to later inform everyone that the bride was a virgin. For this she received gifts after which the men would go onto the roof and fire shots in the air to divulge the news over the entire region.

# Return of Njdeh

On December 21, 1955, at the cemetery near Vladimir Central prison, two inmates buried an old convict. Without a coffin and without much zeal. A few blows with a crowbar on frozen land, a few strokes with a shovel, the small mound was ready.
Later a plaque appeared on the grave that read: "Garegin Ter-Harutyunyan 1886-1955." And below it: "Njdeh."
In 1983, interpreter Pavel Ananian stole the remains of the great Armenian military commander, the legendary *Sparapet*, and secretly brought them to Armenia. Today, we can finally reveal the details of this operation.

Interview by **Anna Lorents**



**Mr. Ananian, how did you agree to play the role of the protagonist in such a dangerous detective story?**
The most interesting thing is that I'm not a hero at all. I have never even considered myself a brave man. And now, recalling all the details, I still wonder how all this could have happened to me.
**Were you of sound, mind and memory?**
I dare hope so. But I was also desperate. In many ways, it was my father's fault. He grew up in a bankrupt family of atheists. As long as I can remember he hated the Soviet system. So it was natural that under his influence, I became a staunch anti-Soviet by the age of 12 or, to be exact, landed in a permanent state of hopeless apathy. I was never a member of any organization but I mixed with dissidents and, of course, read banned and censured literature. Then the *Sparapet* quietly entered my otherwise boring and monotonous life. And not in the form of conversations and disputes about him, but in quite a real way – in 1976, I somewhat unexpectedly married his granddaughter, the beautiful Garine. And I began to call my wife Gohar, as Njdeh used to call his wife. Soon our daughter was born whom we named Lilia after my mother-in-law. But Njdeh also called his daughter Lilia. Thus, he burst into my life, like into an enemy's camp, and captured it.
**But your wife did not send you to dig up the remains of her grandfather, did she?**
No. Although, as I understand now, there was always a subconscious need to show her that I was the real deal and deserved to be with her. But it was not she who sent me. In 1980, I met Gurgen Armaganyan who had already served his time in the prison camps of Kolyma. This man did something unreal: in 1944, he collected an arsenal of weapons, planning to retreat to the mountains and organize resistance in the case of a Turkish attack. He was turned in by his own people. The death sentence was replaced by 10 years in prison. Having served it, he returned to Yerevan where we got to know each other.
Finally I was not alone. He would bring me wonderful books through which amazing people entered my life – warriors and heroes Dzhohk Grayr, Akhpyur Serob, Andranik, Dro. And when I read a book about Njdeh authored by Monte Melkonian (Avo), I felt as though my once cut-off roots were placed back into the soil again. Gurgen worshipped Njdeh. We used to meet frequently and the conversations invariably revolved around the *Sparapet*. We talked about the Bolsheviks who tried to portray him as an Armenian Hitler and womanizer. And about our real Njdeh – the hero who took command over the virtually unarmed army of village boys, and routed elite units of the glorious 11th Red Army. About how and why he crossed the Arax River and left home. About him participating in the creation of the Armenian battalions in Hitler's army; about that desperate attempt to return to his homeland and the terrible fate of a man who had been fighting for freedom all his life but died in confinement in the Vladimir Central prison. And also about his wish that he should be buried in Armenia and his notebooks to be given to his people.
**Was the idea to steal *Sparapet's* remains brought up by Armaganyan too?**
Being a philologist I favor exact wording. I would formulate it differently. I used to head the technical information department of the defense industry agency Astro in 1982 when a group of Armenian patriots, whom I had never seen before, gave me half an order and half a request through their messenger Gurgen Armaganyan: go to Vladimir where Garegin Njdeh was reportedly buried, and try to find his grave. In his book, the former Minister of Syunik (Mountain Armenia), Devedjian, described the terrible years he spent in prison along with Njdeh and gave very valuable information about the last days of the *Sparapet*, the prisoner, and published a photo of his grave. With this picture I went to Russia in full readiness to put Njdeh's wanderings to an end. Do you know that 'Njdeh' means wanderer in Armenian?



← Leader of the Armenian national liberation movement, Garegin Njdeh.

**Why did they choose you for this?**
My views were known to everybody. Plus, I think, it was important that I had that neutral appearance of an average Soviet intellectual with no expressed ethnic characteristics and a good knowledge of Russian. In short, I left without much hope of success.
**And yet you managed to find the grave.**
Not immediately. In the archives of Vladimir I said I was looking for the grave of my grandfather and they allowed me to rake through the documents. But I couldn't find any notebooks dated 1953-1956. It seemed that my search was stalled from the very beginning. Then a man named Henrik came up to me and asked if he might be of help. I explained my situation. "Try to remember anything else," he said. What else could I remember? But suddenly a picture surfaced in my head: Gurgen's garden, the elders saying that Njdeh is buried somewhere close to a church where that scary prison for especially dangerous criminals is located. I blurted it all out, and Henry smiled: "Now we have a reference point. This is our historic cemetery." It felt really uncomfortable to involve an uninformed man in a dangerous enterprise, and on our way to the place I told him everything. "My father was executed in 1937," he replied. And we became comrades in arms.
**So at this point you had only a few technicalities left?**
Not exactly. Can you imagine the size of the cemetery at the Vladimir Central prison? When we arrived, we started clearing snow from all the gravestones, but did not find a grave with the sign we were looking for. I was like a man possessed, like a sick man. There was no limit to my despair, and unconsciously my steps took me to the church. Candles, worshippers... suddenly, something creaked on the iconostasis. I turned to the sound. Some man was angrily staring at me from a huge portrait – I did not even know then that it was Jesus. And then I – an ardent Soviet atheist and skeptic – started weeping childishly and stupidly, asking and begging Him, "Please, help me, there's no one else to help..." Mind you, I was a cynic, skeptic, but not a man who would be talking to a portrait! Shaken by what had happened, moving backwards I left the church and dashed,



↑
Njdeh before his arrest.



→
The tomb in the Spitakavor churchyard.

as if I knew where to go, to an unmarked grave with a wooden fence exactly like my photo. Now tell me, how one is supposed to not believe in God after that! I pulled out my only document and started comparing it with the original. It matched perfectly. I climbed over the fence and began to clear snow from the grave. There was no plaque. Then it dawned on me that the plaque could have been a temporary one, most likely used only to take the photo. By that time Henrik came back. He also checked the photo with the original and agreed – it must be the grave. And yes, it was – I felt it with my palm pressed to the stone. I was almost suffocated by feelings. Like a child I was jumping and shouting, "He's here! He's here!"

**Did you return the remains to Yerevan right away?**

I was not tasked with bringing the remains. They expected new information from me and I delivered it. Immediately upon arrival, I reported the discovery to Gurgen Armaganyan. He gave me the assignment to bring the remains of Njdeh from Vladimir in August of 1983. To the question, why me? – a man without any experience in such matters or necessary training, I was told: "Exactly because of it. You will not raise suspicions. Nobody would ever think you are capable of doing something like this." I couldn't come up with any objections, and time has proven the correctness of this decision. At first, I was told that I would go with bodyguards and we should be armed. But later, they changed the plan and, I think, for the better. Any group, especially armed, could have attracted attention. To be honest, I was really confused. Carrying the remains across almost the entire Soviet Union seemed to be an impossible mission. But it was too late to step back.

**What happened after you went to Vladimir Central Prison?**

Henrik introduced me to a retired KGB colonel who was supposed to be my backup. I immediately realized that any support this heavily drinking grandpa could have provided would be a purely psychological one. Still, we went to the grave together. I sat the colonel under a tree nearby to cover for me and opened a bottle of vodka to prevent him from getting bored and started digging up the grave in broad daylight. I used a shovel first and hands later trying not to damage the *Sparapet's* remains. Njdeh was buried not by a family, but by a pair of degenerate thieves. So he was lying close to the surface, barely covered with earth and without a coffin. First, I took out and laid down the bones, then found the skull – it was heavy like a gold cast. I did not rush at all and was completely calm even when the church parishioners were passing by, or soldiers or, most surprisingly, the police. Strangely, they did not react either, as if digging up graves was an absolutely normal, everyday activity. I finished without any problems. The colonel later admitted that I acted like a true professional. It was only when I came home that I started shaking heavily. In the morning, I put the *Sparapet's* remains into a bag and went to the railway station.

**Did you return to Yerevan by train?**

Of course! They surely wouldn't let me on a plane with my precious cargo. I arrived in Yerevan without incident and immediately headed with the backpack to Armaganyan. The elders listened to me and unanimously concluded that they were absolutely right in choosing a rookie for such an important job – any professional would have been caught immediately. I gave them the backpack. The mission was complete. The wanderer returned to his homeland forever. However, he was buried several years later. It was a difficult time, and *Sparapet's* remains were kept in the basement of one of the 'kidnapping' organizers, linguist Varag Arakelyan. Njdeh now rests in the courtyard of the cozy Spitakavor church, close to Yeghegnadzor. Every year on June 17 young people gather there to commemorate the great warrior and philosopher. And one of his vertebrae was later reburied at Mount Khustup. Such was the will of the commander himself.

**Do you have a feeling that you've done something important for your nation, for Njdeh or perhaps for his granddaughter?**

Well, I certainly don't feel as though I am a hero. But what I really want and what I many times have requested the authorities to do is to conduct a scientific examination and establish beyond any doubt that these are Njdeh's remains. It is very important to be sure of this. And, I think, not just for me. ■



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# Dolma “Biayna”

At one time, the meat filling for dolma was wrapped in only grape leaves. The dish was served warm, and once cooled, it was taken away from the table. Hence the expression “like a cold dolma” that Armenians use to describe a passive, uninteresting, and humorless person.

Today, the filling for dolma is wrapped in cabbage leaves, and is stuffed into vegetables such as tomatoes, eggplants and bell peppers, among others. The root of the word “toli,” which in old Armenian means “grapevine,” has been preserved in the names of all the variations of this dish.

The type of dolma that bears the name of the ancient Armenian state of Biayna stands out for its unique preparation, where instead of ground meat, ribs of lamb are used.

First, the meat is tenderized. Once the tenderloin is ready, it must be wrapped with *bulgur* (cracked wheat), mixed with finely chopped pieces of sheep tail fat, tomatoes, sweet pepper, greens, dried fruits and onion so that only the small part of the bone is left outside. Then it is wrapped in cabbage leaves, placed into the ceramic plate that is covered with *lavash*. Pour the water mixed with white wine over the delicacy and add a couple of slices of tomatoes and dried fruits. And the last touch – the entire dish must be covered with *lavash* and be placed into a *tonir* (a large earthen oven generally used for baking bread) or a regular oven for 40 minutes. The sauce made of yogurt and garlic is not used for Biayna. It is served with traditional dolma.

**Ingredients:**
8.5 oz lamb ribs
3 oz dried apricots and plums
2 oz bulgur
5.5 oz cabbage
5.5 oz tomatoes
2 oz sheep tail fat
sweet pepper, onion, greens, salt















Amos Martirosyan



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# Survival Test

**For some unknown reason, compared to the number of ancient temples, very few ancient fortresses have been preserved in the territory of Armenia. The most famous of all the fortresses is Amberd. It was built in the seventh century A.D. by the grand dukes of the Kamsarakan Dynasty and is located 7,546 feet above sea level, on the slopes of Mount Aragats. According to one source, this citadel got its name due to the lofty mountain location: *Ampberi berd* is translated from Armenian as "fortress of the clouds."**

Text **Artavazd Yeghiazaryan** | Photo **Hayk Melkonyan**



The cupola of the famous Byurakan Astronomical Observatory was clearly visible from the road that led to the main citadel of Armenia. However, we drove past the village of Byurakan, as the patrimony of Armenian astrophysics would be a story for another day. Soon the serpentine road winded its way between the yellow autumnal mountains like a gray snake. Road signs appeared on the asphalt – below the indicators pointing at the right turn (this was done in case you had missed the earlier road sign), with Latin letters it was written "Anberd." Was that a spelling mistake? Perhaps the authors of the asphalt pointers stuck to another etymological version of that name, according to which it did not derive from the closeness to the clouds, but from *anarik berd*, meaning "impregnable fortress." While we were discussing this issue, the ancient citadel appeared from behind the mountains. After a few more kilometers the road took us right to its base, where the Arkhashan and Amberd rivers met. A lonely trio of ancient *khachkars* (cross stones) was visible not far off. Judging by the fragments and empty pedestals, one could conclude that a multitude of cross-stones once used to stand there; however that cemetery had less luck if compared, for instance, with the famous cemetery of Noratus. Nevertheless, the remaining three *khachkars* on the very top of the hill were truly spectacular.



↑ The observatory is seen in the distance.



← The ruins of the eastern gates of the fortress.

Like all other gravestones, these *khachkars* faced pensively towards the West, as if they didn't notice the citadel framed by the bold mountains and hills, and covered by enormous shadows of overhanging clouds.

We returned to the fortress. My eyes caught sight of several information plates that were recently placed for tourists. One of them had text written in Braille. It seemed ironic: what good was it for a blind person to cross such a distance in order to read the text about Amberd and not be able to see it? One of the local tour guides who had just set off with a group of tourists, said that a year ago the plate proved necessary for one visitor. He was a Karabakh veteran.

During the tour, a freedom fighter who lost his eyesight on the battlefield said that he wanted to feel the grandeur of the fortress. "I took his hand and we walked along the entire fortress and the church. That was the most amazing excursion I ever had," said the tour guide. Indeed, there is something about Amberd that cannot be seen, but only felt.

The first settlements on the southern slopes of Mount Aragats, the highest mountain in Armenia, date back to the Stone Age. And Amberd – the castle and part of the fortress walls – was built in the 7th century by the grand dukes of the Kamsarakan clan and served as a summer residency for them. Three centuries later, it was passed into the possession of the powerful princely family of Pahlavuni who had been in rivalry with the royal dynasty of Bagratuni. Soon Amberd became the main residence of the clan, at the same time serving as an important defense point for the state.

The main task of feudal castles built all over Armenia was to protect the lands from enemies. The country constantly had been attacked by the Romans, Parthians, Byzantines, Persians, Mongols and Turks. The fortresses were elevated high in the mountains preventing the enemies from reaching them easily. Availability of drinking water was another integral consideration, as it would have been impossible to survive through a siege without it. We forced our way to the castle through a rocky path passing three small buildings – the bath house, the chapel and the arched pool that was used as a water reservoir. It was somehow exciting to realize that many centuries ago, during the harsh Middle Ages, only a very few could enter this place. But now there were no obstacles. The guard won't pierce you with a spear, rocks will not fall from above, and you can step fearlessly on the wide staircase leading to the ceremonial chambers.

Tired from a weary road trip, the respected guests could rest in these chambers decorated with carpets covering the walls and floors and enjoy the wonderful view of Mount Ararat. They could also freshen up with cold water from the distant springs that flowed through the basalt pipes into the pool located on the ground floor.

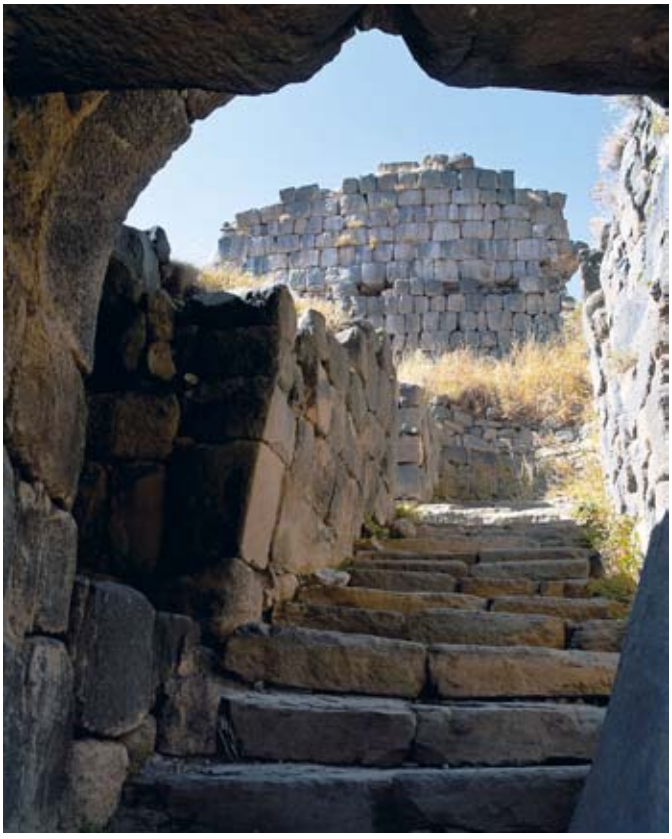
Its remnants can be found on the bottom of the gorge even today, and the pool is one of the best preserved constructions in the castle. If needed (there were failures with water supply at all times), the inhabitants of the fortress could go down to the river taking secret

How wonderful was this trio of *khachkars* on the very top of the hill. Like all other gravestones, these *khachkars* faced pensively towards the West, as if they didn't notice the citadel framed by the bold mountains and hills, and covered by enormous shadows of overhanging clouds.



← Stone crosses of the medieval cemetery near Amberd.





The entrance to the castle is one with a very rocky path.

Remnants of the water pipe that supplied the fortress with water.





The round stone ornament decoration resembles the Taurus symbol.

Guests can rest in these chambers decorated with carpets covering the walls and floors and enjoy the wonderful view of Mount Ararat. They could also freshen up with cold water from the distant springs that flowed through the basalt pipes into the pool located on the ground floor.

underground routes. Local guides tell the tourists about the fortress' water system with pride. While we were busy observing the residence of the Pahlavuni family, one English-speaking group of tourists was listening attentively to the lecture about the water system. One should have seen the tour guide's expression when a respectable lady inquired: So, the locals would use the rain water?

The castle was a three-story building with a row of five rooms on each floor. It was fortified outside with huge supporting towers. Today, climbing over the ruins of the interior walls, one can easily ascend to one of the tower's top and cast a glace at surrounding territories. Besides the historical monuments, there are also nature's masterpieces known as basalt suns – radial basalt monoliths shining with rocky beams on the steep wall of the gorge. There used to be a small settlement near the castle where the caretakers would live. However, time and foreign invaders were merciful only towards the retaining walls, and even those are overgrown with a heavy layer of grass and are invisible to the fleeting eye. But if you look closely, you can see that the path that leads from the castle to the church has been made recently – it passes through the ruins of the fortress and the buildings of the settlement. On the eastern part of the fortress wall we noticed small round apertures – the only remnants of the watchtowers from which the archers could successfully reach the enemy.

Fragments of ancient clay articles were crunching under our feet. It was highly possible that one of those pieces was a fragment of the bowl from which the grand duke used to drink spring water. Indeed, archaeologists have made a great deal of excavations in Amberd. So many things have been found there: decorated faience cups, bronze lamps, Chinese porcelain, Egyptian painted glass, and remains of perfectly preserved *lavash*... Perhaps the most interesting finding is the grave of the duke's jester that was discovered under the flag-stones of the



The Church of Holy Mother of God's view from the fortress wall.

bath house. Most likely, the jester's duty was to amuse the duke during his time of rest in the bath house. The jester's rooster was buried with him – feathered bullies were indispensable attributes of men of that profession. Seems like these masters of the art of comedy had a work to do in the future world as well.

The Holy Mother of God Church was constructed in 1026 AD in the territory of the castle. The inscription on the inner side of the doorway states that the temple was built by the commission of the famous commander Vahram Pahlavuni. There is also a number of other names carved on those walls; they were engraved much later by the Armenian contemporaries, who dream to leave at least a single memory about themselves to coming generations.

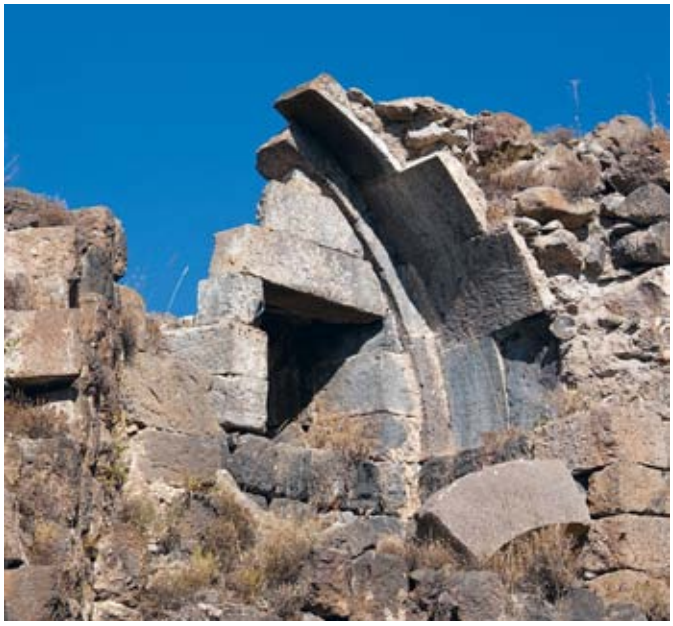
The church is rather aesthetic; the most eye-catching decoration on it is the ornamental framing of the southern door. However, for its ideal proportions, this building is considered to be one of the most perfect constructions of its time. For a long time the church stood semi-ruined. But it was restored in 1970. Like any other Armenian church, this one also has *khachkars* and tombstones erected at its entrance. One of them attracted attention with a strange pattern – a small arrow resembling a computer mouse cursor with a circle on the other end. It also resembled a fallic symbol. I wondered what could have been the main occupation of the person buried there. A bit away, there stood another intriguing element: a flat round stone on a pedestal decorated with an ornament resembling the Taurus symbol – a circle with horns. Perhaps it was a stone, and the ornaments were carved with the intention that blood flowed through them.

Having observed and photographed every possible thing among the ruins of the fortress, we scattered along the edge of the cliff above the precipice. The wall's remnants descend along the slopes of the hill down to the very bottom of the gorge. Not far from there stand the only remains of what once served as a room for the guards of the arch; the long chains of tourists walk through them to this day.

The history of Amberd greatly resembles the history of Armenia. In the end of 11th century, the Seljuk Turks invaded the fortress and turned it into barracks. A century later, Armenian commander-in-chief Zakareh Zakarian managed to win back the ancient citadel from the enemy. But in 1236, Mongols invaded these lands and looted the possessions of the Pahlavuni clan.

You can get to Amberd driving past Byurakan. Buses depart from Yerevan to Byurakan from a small station near the State Museum of Wood-Carving. The distance between Byurakan and the fortress is about six miles and you need to take a taxi. However, considering the bad conditions of the entire road, it's best to get a taxi in Yerevan (about 27 miles), which should cost you no more than 10,000 drams round trip. This place remained desolate up until the archeological excavations of 1929. Nevertheless, Amberd passed the centuries-long survival test and despite all the wars and destruction, it is still standing under the clouds. ■

The Holy Mother of God Church is rather ascetic. The most eye-catching decoration on it is the ornamental framing of the southern door. However, for its ideal proportions, this building is considered to be one of the most perfect constructions of its time.



↓ One of nature's masterpieces is called the a basalt sun.



→ Fragment of the arch above the western gates of the fortress.



# Yerevan in Mother Tongue

Thousands gathered on Northern Boulevard in Yerevan to celebrate the launch of *Yerevan Magazine* in Armenian with a live performance by the up and coming band Dorians. Although different in format than its Russian and English sister publications, the content maintains the fresh perspective and voice readers have come to know and love.

Photo **Arnos Martirosyan, Hayk Melkonyan, Mariam Loretsyan**















# Under the Ottoman Colors

On the cusp of the 20th century, sports began to rapidly develop within the Armenian community of the Ottoman Empire. Armenian athletes were the first-ever representatives of the Empire at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden. The Armenian soccer club Balta-Liman stunned Turkish Galatasaray 5-0 in their very first match. After that the Turkish athletes were told that their ultimate goal was to "strive against successes of ethnic minorities in sports."

Text **Hayk Demoyan** |
Photo **from Hayk Demoyan's book Armenian Sports and Physical Training in the Ottoman Empire**





The Ottoman Empire of the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century was a classic tyranny: any dissent and any element of progress was brutally suppressed. Sometimes it ran into absurdity: Sultan Abdul Hamid II banned not only usage of the word "Armenia," but also... the H2O formula. The Sultan decided that the chemical formula water heavily hinted that "Hamid 2 is a complete zero." It is understandable that under such conditions no sports could advance, putting it mildly.

At the same time, many foreign colleges (mostly American ones) were operating across the Ottoman Empire in Aintab, Kharpert, Marsovan, etc. An absolute majority of their students were Armenian, Greek and Jew. The curriculum of every such school included gymnastics and physical training, and gradually a keen interest in sports started spreading throughout the rest of the Armenian youth. Soon some of them became the first Armenian professional athletes, such as Vaan Cheraz, Shavarsh Krisyan, Grigor Akopyan.

The foundation of *The Marmnamarz* newspaper (The Athlete) in 1911 in Constantinople was considered a truly remarkable accomplishment – it was the first sports periodical not only for the Armenian press but also for the whole Ottoman Empire. Its chief editor, Shavarsh Kristyan, and his colleagues were calling on men and women to play sports (and it was happening a hundred years ago in a Muslim country!). The paper urged people to participate in various sports contests trying to instill the spirit of competitiveness both within the Armenian community and beyond.



← Participant of the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm, track and field athlete Vagram Papazyan.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**Disbandment of the Balta-Liman Soccer Team**

As we have learned from a reliable source, upon completion of the Armenian Olympic Games the outstanding Balta-Liman soccer team will be re-formed. We wish the team every success and we would like to wish all other teams to be careful and defend their goal posts more attentively.

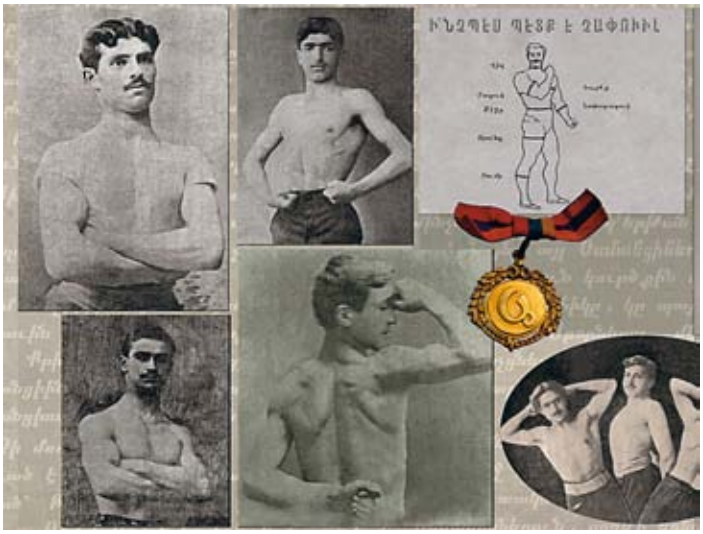
**Participants of the first 1911 Pan-Armenian Olympic Games:**

Clubs – Agoranyan from Besiktas, Tork (Gum-Gapu), Araks (Bera), Zhogovurd club of the Dashnaktsutyun party (Samatya), the People's Club (Gatygyukh), the Armenian Club (Gatygyukh), Masyats (Gatygyukh), Kukunyan (Topkapi), Artavazd (Guru Cheshme), the Armenian Youth Union of Shishli, a group of students of American Robert College, editorial stuff of *The Marmnamarz*, the Progressive Union (Uskudar), the Self-development Student Union (Uskudar), the Raffi Union (Uskudar).

From *The Marmnamarz*

## Stockholm

In 1912, at the Olympic Games in Stockholm, the Armenian athletes claimed the attention of the international arena for the first time. The Turkish delegation was headed by Selim Serri Tarjan and, although the government had not allocated any funds, the Armenian community gave the Olympic team a helping hand. The Turkish Armenians financed the trip to Stockholm of track and field athletes Mkrtych Mkryan and Vagram Papazyan. The necessary amount had been raised from every remote corner of the Empire – the Armenians considered participation in the Fifth Olympiad to be a matter of honor. Moreover, after the athletes had arrived in the Swedish capital and discovered that the city was decorated with flags of all the participating nations except for the Ottoman flag, they registered an official protest. And only this action forced the Swedes to hoist the Ottoman flag. Later Mkryan and Papazyan would find out that the Swedish government had intentionally ignored the Ottoman Empire's standard, in protest of the Adana massacre of the Armenians. The Armenian athletes could hardly imagine that in just three years that very country whose national honor they were defending in front of the world, would commit the genocide of their compatriots.



Members of the sports club of Perpelyan Seminary in Constantinople, and Armenian athletes on the left.

The Armenian athletes could hardly imagine that in just three years Turkey, whose national honor they were defending at the Stockholm Olympics, would commit a bloody massacre of their compatriots.



For a long time, Turk Selim Tarjan could not accept the fact that among the athletes at the Olympics there were no representatives of 'the great nation.' Later he regretfully wrote, "Various nations had showed at the Games their prowess, their fighters – all of them, except for the Turks." It came as no surprise that he did not attend the opening ceremony despite the initial plan to march across





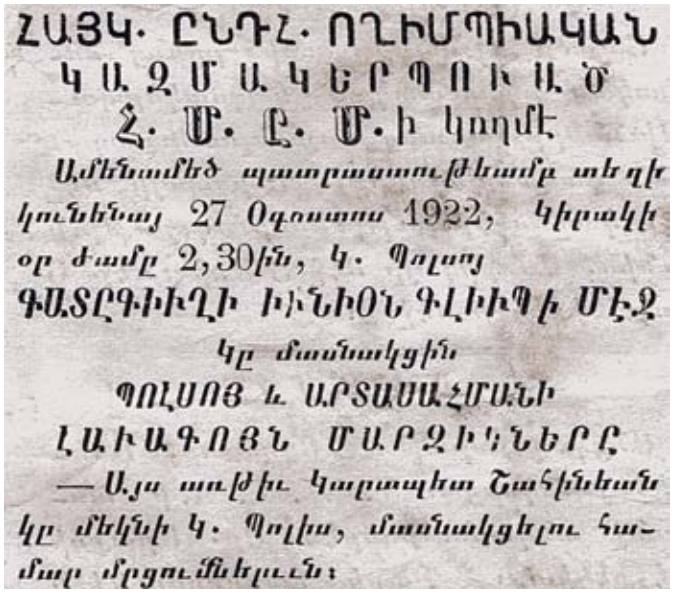

↑
Soccer field layout printed in one of the *Marmnamarz* issues.

←
Editor in chief of T*he Marmnamarz* Shavarsh Krisyan.



↑
Der Zor soccer team, beginning of the 1920s.

→
Announcement about the beginning of the Pan-Armenian Games in Constantinople.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**Luck of the Armenian Club**

On the third day of *Bayram* (Muslim New Year celebration) the sports competitions that were held was chaired by the Mayor of the city of Izmir. This included a soccer tournament in which Artsiv Miyutun from Paritsak won 3:0. A young gentleman named Vagarshak Vardapetov won the 20 km cycling race.

From *The Marmnamarz*, 1912

In his memoirs, track and field athlete Vagram Papazyan wrote that his last thought before he lost consciousness was, "I wonder what flag will be flown if I win – the Armenian or Ottoman?"




→ Araks soccer club – a part of Balta-Liman team, Constantinople, 1910.

→ Players of the Armenian Scouts Asatur Potikyan and Gabriel Machryan, 1920.



the field with the Armenian athletes. In all, 2,541 athletes from 28 countries participated in the Stockholm Olympics. Mkryan delivered decent results in pentathlon and discus throwing, taking fifth place by combined points. Papazyan was close to the gold medal in running 1,500 meters. He was ahead of all other runners but lost consciousness a few meters before the finish line – the result of poor training. In his memoirs Papazyan wrote about what flashed across his mind right before he fainted, "I wonder what flag will be flown if I win – the Armenian or Ottoman?" The compatriots' performance inspired many in the Armenian community and the next goal was immediately set: participation in the 1916 Olympics in Berlin. However, the First World War made all the plans null.

## Sports

It was Shavarsh Krisyan again who conceived the Pan-Armenian Games. The project originated in 1918 after the Young Turks had come to power and a political thaw began in the Empire. Armenian sports and scout clubs adopted Krisyan's idea with great enthusiasm. The Games were a unique phenomenon not only in the life of the Armenian community of the Ottoman Empire, but also in the history of Armenian sports in general. The first Games were held on May 1, 1911, in the sports hall of Constantinople's Union Club. More than 2,000 fans attended the event. In the following two years, public interest for the games grew even bigger. Moreover, the third Pan-Armenian Games came under the patronage of the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Zaven I Der Yeghiayan. The Games were hosted by Komitas Vardapet himself, who also handed prizes to the winners. Armenians had high expectations of the fourth Games. On June 14, 1914, the opening ceremony began. The released doves flew up to the sky – exactly as it happened many centuries ago at the opening of the Navasard Games (which were similar to the Olympics). The event, where Armenian athletes had come together from several cities of the Empire, was interrupted by the beginning of the war.

## Soccer

The Ottoman Empire 'caught' soccer at the end of the 19th century from the British. The first professional club was



→
The Armenian soccer team in Aleppo, 1923.

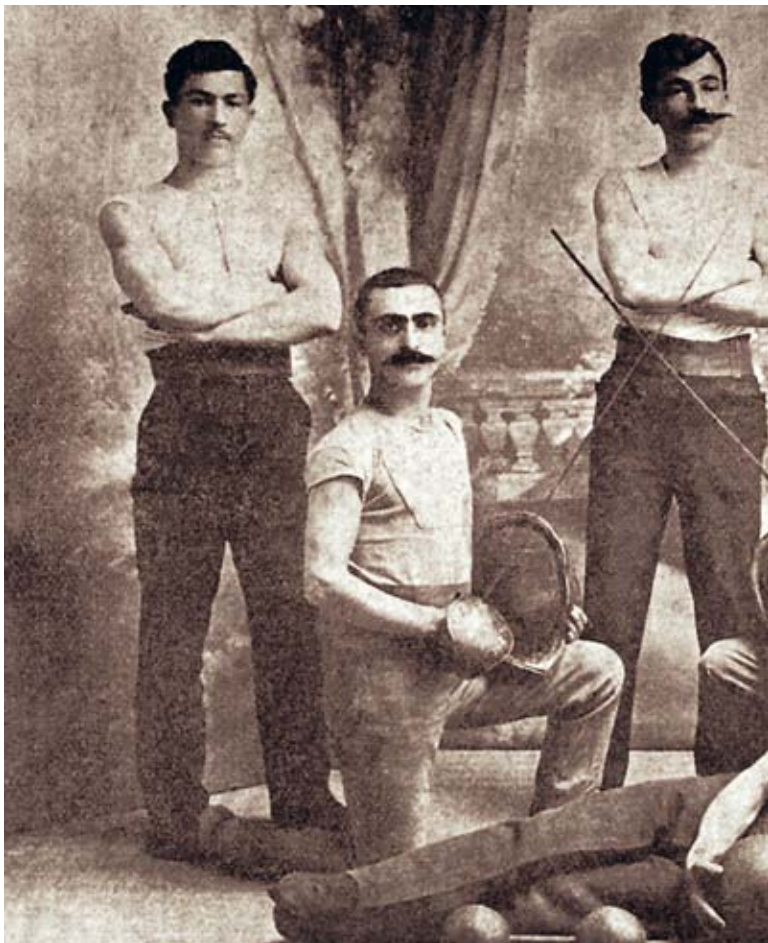
↓
A discus thrower on the grounds of Robert College.

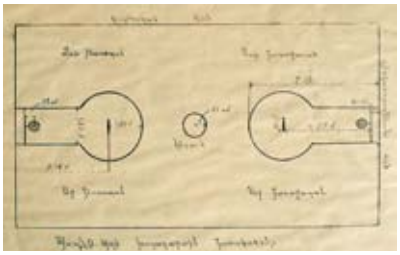


In 1918, the All-Armenian Sports Union was formed and the national Olympics resumed. Sports symbolized a revival, the beginning of a new life. It was an attempt to revitalize the nation's spirit.

opened in Smyrna (now Izmir). One of the club's leading players was Zare Kuyumjayan. Today's most famous Turkish soccer teams – Besiktas, Fenerbahce and Galatasaray – also came into existence in the first decade of the 20th century. Their major rivals were the clubs of the Constantinople Armenians. The first match between Armenian and Turkish teams was played in 1906. Armenian Balta-Liman routed Turkish Galatasaray 5-0. Later the Armenian club was disbanded and two teams were formed in its place – Araks and Tork. Soccer began spreading within the Armenian community in 1905 when Vaan Cheraz brought soccer balls from Britain and organized some games. The Constantinople Armenians played on one of the coastal islands as far from strangers' eyes as possible. During the rule of Abdul Hamid – the one who did not like water's chemical formula – soccer was prohibited. The censure was caused in the first place by the shorts the players wore. The second reason was that undesirable conversations

→
Athletes of Artsive society in Trabzon, 1912.





**Armenians at the Stockholm Games, 1912**

We are thrilled to inform our valued readers that Messrs. Mkrtych Mkrtchyan and Vagram Papazyan departed for Stockholm to participate in international sports competitions.

When the Turks with all their resources are not able to send a single athlete to uphold the honor of the Ottoman flag, this role will be played by two Armenians. Of course we are delighted and full of hope that even more Armenians will participate in the VI Olympiad which will be held in 1916 in Berlin.

**Handing out Prizes, 1913**

Upon the closing of the sports competition (the third Pan-Armenian Games) Komitas Vardapet, in his speech, stressed the importance of the moment. He noted the high moral value of such events and the crucial role Armenian youth would play in the efforts to retain the nation's integrity. Vardapet handed prizes to the winners, kissing their foreheads with wise parting words.

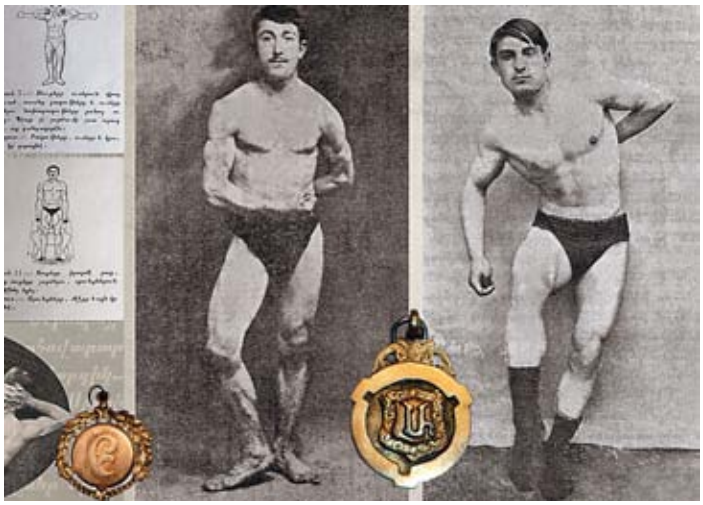
From *The Marmnamarz*

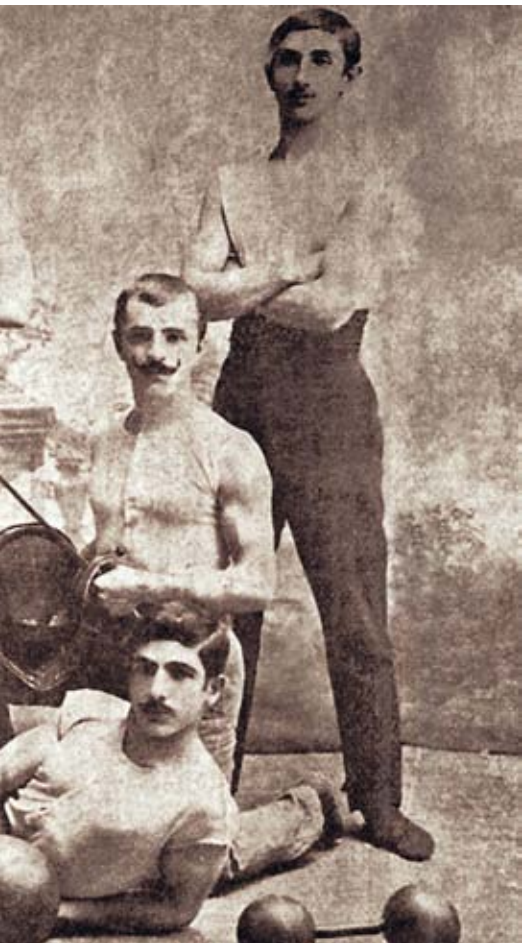
could be held within large gatherings of young people, and the Sultan was leery of political consequences. There were accounts of players arrested right in the middle of a match.

On the eve of the First World War, someone came up with the idea of forming the Armenian Soccer League. *Marmnamarz's* editor in chief Shavarsh Krisyan became its most eager advocate. Strange as it may seem, the idea was realized only in 1921 when the World War – as well as the Genocide to which the initiator of the League had fallen victim – was over. But, unfortunately, it did not exist for long.

In 1913, the nationalistic wing of the Young Turk Party, whose main ideology was Pan-Turkism, came to power in the Ottoman Empire. Propaganda involved sports too: the party demanded that Turkish athletes win all competitions. Victory in sports became a matter of national honor. For example, the ultimate goal of the Turkish Altay soccer team, formed in 1911, was "to strive against successes of ethnic minorities in sports." The government did not spare money: athletes were paid very well; they were welcome to become party members and were put in positions of authority.

→
Armenian Athletes





Many Armenian athletes fell victim to the First World War and the Genocide of 1915. Among them was leader of the Armenian sports movement, Shavarsh Krisyan. All the Armenian sports clubs were shut down. Some athletes were drafted into the Turkish army. Olympic athlete Vagram Papazyan served as a signaller at the defense of Gallipoli. Revitalization of Armenian sports began immediately after the war. New clubs were opened, and all-Armenian competitions were held with participation of Armenian clubs from Constantinople and Smyrna.

In 1918, the All-Armenian Sports Union was formed and the national Olympics were resumed. After the Genocide, sports symbolized a revival (for Armenians) – the beginning of a new life. It was an attempt to revitalize the nation's spirit. But all these activities faded away as the Kemalists – the followers of Kemal Ataturk – came to power. Most Armenian clubs and athletes shared their people's fortune, and preferred to emigrate, thus moving to Syria, Greece and other countries. Only a few stayed and joined Turkish clubs.

The sports movement that had originated within the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire gave momentum to the development of sports in Armenian communities of other countries.

And in the 1990s, the Pan-Armenian Games had a rebirth in the already independent Armenia. ■

*ugly — տգեղ [tgegh]*

# Fashion Faux Pas

Richard Seltzer is the person today's actresses can thank for the ever so intimidating "Worst Dressed List." Seltzer, known as Mr. Blackwell, created the List in 1960 when he started ranking actresses on a scale of 1 to 10 on how they dressed on red carpets and in the public eye. Blackwell himself was an actor-turned-fashion designer in the 50s, dressing elite fashionistas like Nancy Reagan in his House of Blackwell creations. Although his last personal list came about in 2007, a year before he died, his legacy lives on through the infamous list. Fashion deprived or simply unknowledgeable, the biggest fashion crimes always caught Mr. Blackwell's eye. Everyone from Zsa Zsa Gabor, Barbra Streisand, Julie Andrews, Queen Elizabeth, Sophia Loren, Farrah Fawcett, Princess Diana and even Cher have made the notorious list since its inception. However, in the last 10 years that Mr. Blackwell outed the fashion-challenged, these celebutons made the cut.

## 1998

Not much happened in 1998, so Mr. Blackwell turned to political scandalist Linda Tripp, naming her the worst dressed public figure in 1998.

## 1999

Superstar and fashion boundary pusher Cher topped the list in 1999. Her leotards, pointy bustiers and sequined everything just may have been too much for Mr. Blackwell to handle.

## 2000

Before her shaved head and numerous meltdowns, pop princess Britney Spears just couldn't get it right when she wasn't on stage. The songstress made the list in 2000.

## 2001

Ten years ago, one of the biggest television phenomena was the reality game show "The Weakest Link." The frown-faced British host Anne Robinson made the show a hit. However, her wardrobe was too drab for Mr. Blackwell and she was ranked the number one worst dressed.

## 2002

The late Anna Nicole Smith just wasn't fabulous enough for Mr. Blackwell. Her loud personality couldn't hide the fact that she didn't know how to dress - at least in 2002.



*In October, the Worst dressed for Oscars will automatically qualify for the Best dressed for Halloween*

## 2003

This was the year of Paris Hilton. Before her jail cell jumpsuits, this socialite just didn't understand the art of fashion. After numerous red carpet disasters, she made her way to the top of the list.

## 2004

Nicollette Sheridan must have been desperate in 2004 when her uninteresting style threw her to the top of the Worst Dressed List. Would Eva Longoria ever make that mistake?

## 2005

Back again for a second dose, Britney Spears was still making fashion mistakes five years later. Hit her with a fashion fine one more time.

## 2006

Just a year later, Ms. Spears still couldn't get it right. This time she shared the spotlight with best friend-for-a-day Paris Hilton. It was Spears' third offense and Hilton's second. Mr. Blackwell didn't give anyone a break.

## 2007

Shockingly, on Mr. Blackwell's last list, he dubbed today's fashion icon Victoria Beckham as the absolute worst dressed in 2007. For a second time in the last decade, Posh Spice needed a fashion awakening.

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