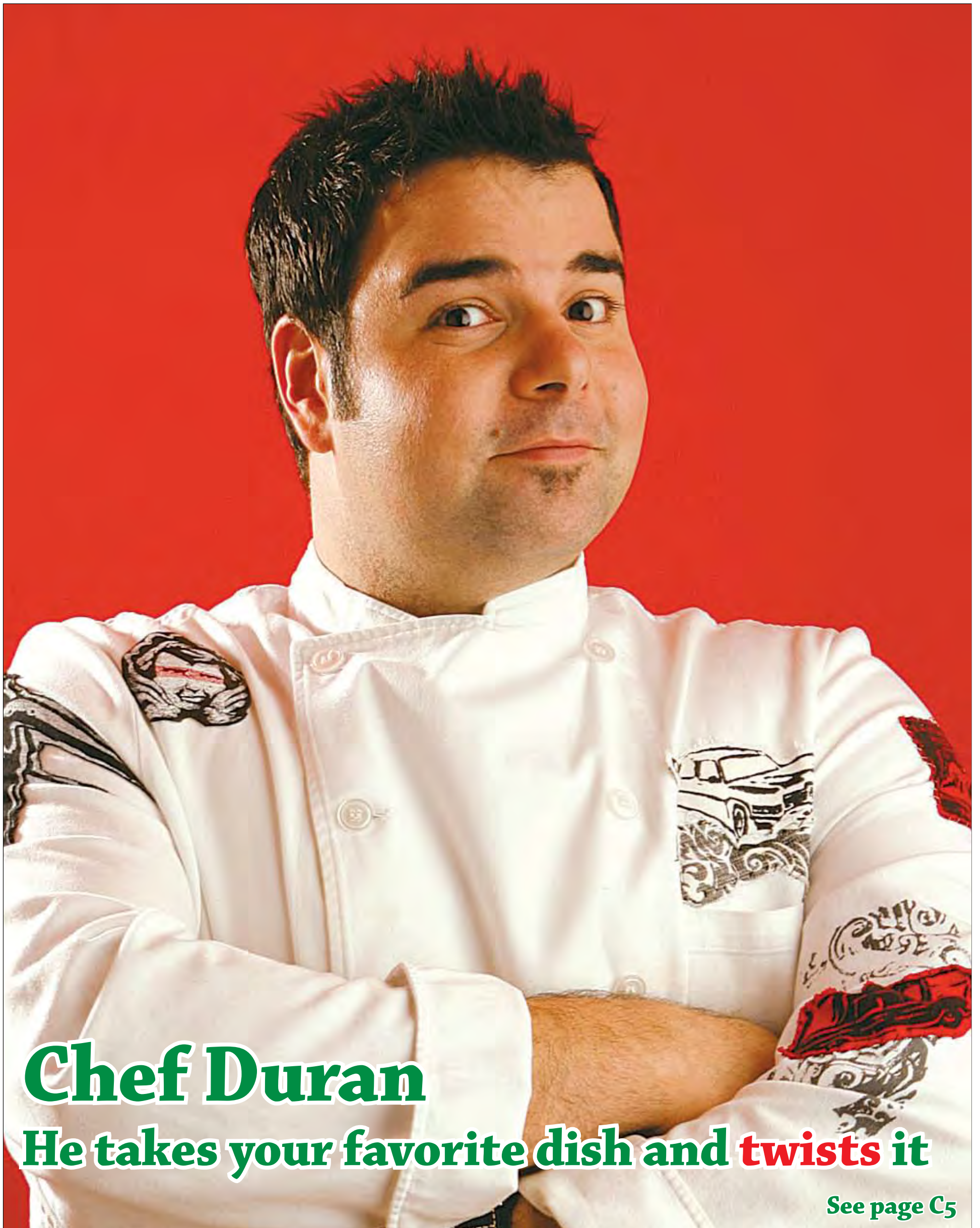


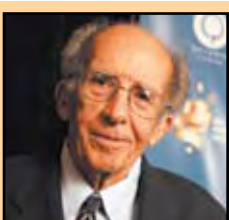
October 18, 2008



Chef Duran

He takes your favorite dish and **twists it**

See page C5



J. Michael Hagopian's
The River Ran Red
premieres at Arpa

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Emancipating
art from in-
tellectualiza-
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intersection
of art and
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poetry matters

Shards of Love from Shiraz



by **Lory Bedikian**

The poem that appears in this column, translated by John Papasian and Gerald Papasian, was first published in *Sojourn at Ararat: Poems of Armenia*, a book of translations which was done for the purpose of putting together the play *Sojourn at Ararat*. While the performance of these poems was not the sole concern of the translators, it did play a small part in how the translations were rendered. The book came later but it is now, unfortunately, out of print. While we wait for it to make its comeback, we can hear this translation among others, luckily on CD today.

People have read far too many poems in which a beloved is idealized and basically unrealistically portrayed. I'm not referring to poems which tell us how the speaker feels or is reacting to their loved one, but those portraits which tell us line by line how perfect this person is. The body is god-like. If we thought twice we may think the poem was written in front of a pristine, well-chiseled statue. Even the mind, the soul tends to be depicted as unstained, kind, pure, and the list goes on. Although I want to appreciate these poems, sometimes I find myself yawning in the middle of them, not out of any critical stance, but just from

Lory Bedikian received her MFA in poetry from the University of Oregon. Her collection of poetry has twice been selected as a finalist in the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition and twice in the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award Competition.



Hovhannes Shiraz.

the fact that I don't think I've known anyone quite that flawless and supreme, or anyone who has come even close.

Many poetry fans know of Sonnet 130 that William Shakespeare wrote, which is a satire of the love poems of his time. His lover's "eyes are nothing like the sun," and "coral is far more red than her lips red," etc. Master Shakespeare goes on to comment on the not-so-pleasing state of her skin tone, hair texture, cheekbones, breath, etc. In the last six lines of his sonnet, he does begin to let us in on the secret, which is that she's not so unattractive. On the contrary, he knows she is beautiful and unique, and while mentioning this, adds that he loves to hear her speak, although he would prefer sounds of other music. This is true love, indeed.

The greatly admired poet Hovhannes Shiraz, known more for his patriotic

verse and themes, has a love poem entitled "Your Eyes," which seems to also be a love poem of true admiration and, of course, honesty.

*You have such rosy, rosy lips
and prettiest of eyes.
And peeping teeth like diamond tips
and the most pretty eyes.
Your cheeks are flushed with rose and milk.
Your eyes, such pretty eyes.
A neck as soft as swan's-down silk
and prettiest of eyes.
Your locks the brightest night outshine,
and eyes, the prettiest eyes.
A waist as slender as a pine
and pretty, pretty eyes.
Your heart is harsh and hard as stone.
But eyes, such pretty eyes.*

Shakespeare's sonnet, which paints an unflattering portrait from the start and mentions briefly at the end that there is love in all of his comparisons, creates its turn in sentiment toward the end. What I find comical, like Shakespeare's sonnet, but more surprising, is Shiraz' penultimate line where he suddenly admits to his love - and to the reader - that her "heart is harsh and hard as stone."

The reason why this line suddenly and effectively stands out is not merely because of its placement at the end of the poem. Shiraz' poem is hypnotic in a sense. We can almost hear him crooning his lover with the lines, with the repetitions of "such pretty eyes," "pretty, pretty eyes," or "prettiest of eyes." We're convinced that this man is really enamored with this person and is doing his best to woo her and win her for eternity. And, as is usually the case, all of the familiar clichés are used, such as the lips, roses, cheeks, eyes, etc. At first, a reader isn't necessarily startled or drawn in by its originality, but by its familiarity and musicality. It is in that second-to-last line that we are woken up from this

lover's lullaby and brought back to reality. If Shiraz should have commented further on a heart that harsh and hard was obviously his own decision, and perhaps it wasn't a matter of if he should or should not, but if he *could* and still win her over.

I know most people may prefer a love poem written to them with lines and metaphors depicting a person of the utmost quality, distinction, flair, and beauty. If people were really, truly seen to be that perfect, how could one possibly live up to that? Would it not be better to have someone see you, good and not-so-good qualities combined, accept them all, and yet love you the same? Would it not be wonderful to be loved, truly loved for whom you are when you wake up and look in the mirror, disheveled and disarrayed, as well as for those evenings you've combed your hair and softened your voice? As the old tune says, now really, "isn't it romantic?"

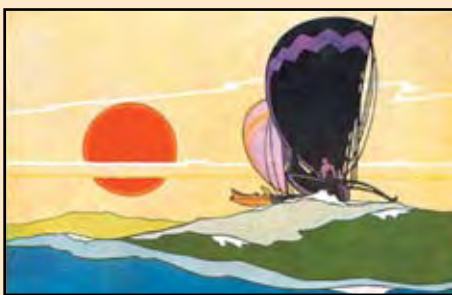
"Your Eyes," translated by John Papasian and Gerald Papasian, from *Sojourn at Ararat: Poems of Armenia*, published, compiled and edited by Gerald Papasian, 1987. Reprinted with permission.

This poem and many others from *Sojourn at Ararat* can be heard on the *Sojourn at Ararat* CD. For more information on the CD and to obtain a preview copy visit: www.pemart.org or www.noraarmani.com

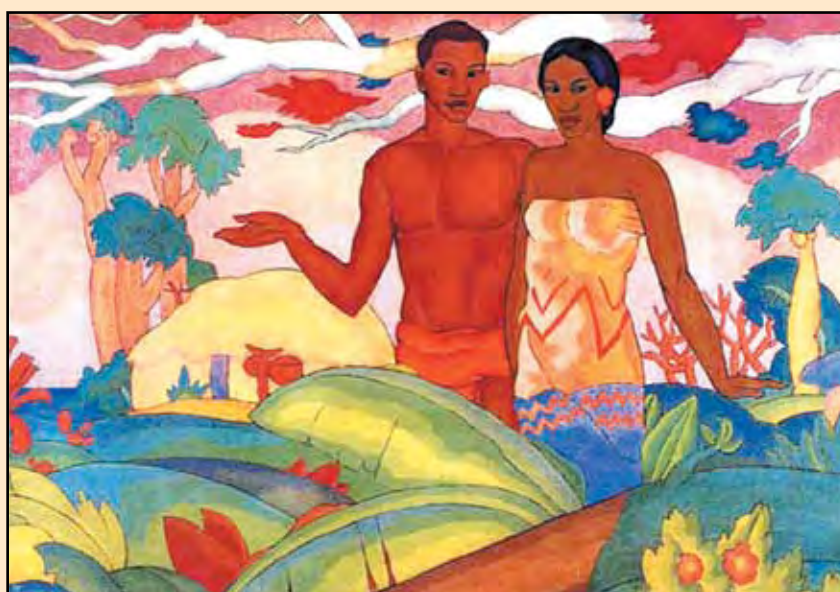
Coming up: Hawaii's Van Gogh

Next week, meet Arman Manookian, a Genocide survivor who landed at Ellis Island at age 16, reinvented himself in the Hawaiian Islands, created some 30 works of art, then took his life at 27.

The sensational story of the making of a legendary, fascinating, yet tragic artist, next week in the *Reporter*.



Early Hawaiians.



Hawaiian Boy and Girl.



Your news goes right here

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On page C1: With his debut book, *Take this Dish and Twist It: Comfort Goods With New and Unexpected Flavors*, Chef Duran, AKA George Kevork Guldalian, is enchanting cooks throughout the nation as he offers a wealth of inventive dishes. Photo: Pam Francis. See story on page C5.

History knows no age

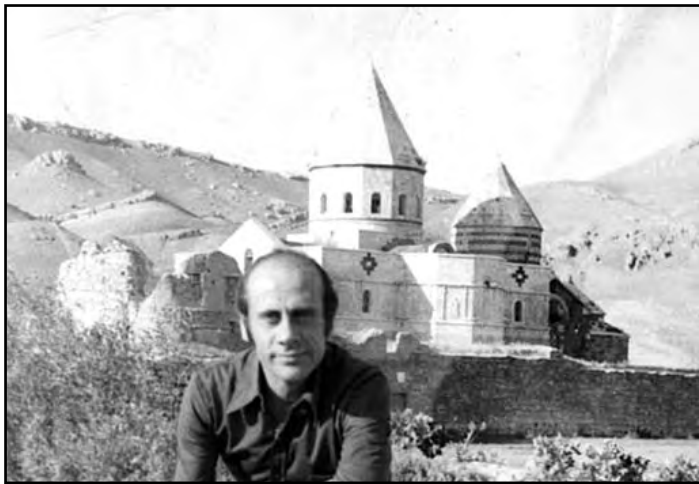
Levon Katerjian continues to keep the troubadour torch alive



by Marina Terteryan with Ishkhan Jinbashian



Levon Katerjian performing with his group



Katerjian visits Iran.



BURBANK, Calif. – By the early 1970s, when Levon Katerjian burst onto the scene, Armenian folk music in the diaspora was slowly but surely being relegated to the status of an antique art. As ever revered, particularly by older aficionados, for its sophistication and wistful evocations of a paradise lost, it was nonetheless rarely performed beyond the odd uptown recital or commemorations of nationally significant anniversaries. Diaspora audiences, already a few generations removed from the Genocide, associated Armenian folk music mostly with painful collective memories and a sense of loss. Instead they yearned for a new sound, one that would mirror the exuberance of their prospering communities and an existential penchant for guilt-free, uncomplicated fun.

While such a sound was energetically delivered by emerging pop stars like Adis Harmandyan, the diaspora's musical landscape, especially in Arab countries, was also awash with Turkish-influenced Armenian pop. Furthermore, many simply preferred listening to Turkish music proper, despite the raised eyebrows across Armenian neighborhoods in Lebanon and elsewhere. The popularity of Turkish music owed equally to its artistic merits and the fact that many Armenians in Arab countries, young and old alike, spoke fluent Turkish.

Still, beginning with the 50th anniversary of the Genocide, in 1965, a backlash loomed on the horizon, with Armenian political parties taking the lead to fight what they considered the plague of Turkophilia in their midst. But even a well-organized, and sometimes violent, public campaign against the habit of listening to Turkish music would prove not quite sufficient to eradicate its lure.

Enter Levon Katerjian, a former sandwich-shop worker who had grown up listening to, and himself performing, the songs of the Armenian *ashugagan* (troubadour) tradition. When he launched his career in the concert halls and summer-resort night clubs of Lebanon, Katerjian became an instant success. That he had the chops to help bring about a bona fide revival of Armenian folk music was clear enough, given his robust voice, vocal range, and abilities as a composer. As importantly, however, Katerjian thrived by anchoring his artistry on a set of impassioned cultural convictions. His "cause" was as much about performing the folk gems he adored - and composing fresh ones

- as fostering a renewed appreciation of language and cultural legacy.

Katerjian's creative formula was simple yet rather revolutionary in his day: to make Armenian folk music accessible to the masses again, infusing it with a modern pop sensibility without sacrificing its underpinnings - in terms of emotion, texture, and fidelity to the source. That formula has stood the test of time, across an almost 40-year career. Recently Katerjian, in semi retirement yet as ever active, registered a comeback with a fiery performance at the Armenian Independence Day Festival in Glendale, on September 21, and the release of a new album.

Accolades

In Katerjian's modest living room sit two display cases, both six feet tall, with artifacts spanning his career. Behind the glass



Levon Katerjian performing in Argentina. With no electricity, the show went on in candlelight.

Levon Katerjian at l'Olympia theater in Paris.



Performing Sayat Nova.

doors, there are tokens of appreciation from Armenian organizations in Armenia, Australia, Argentina, Kuwait, Uruguay, and France, among others, and a Lifetime Achievement Award bestowed on him by the Armenian Music Awards in 2006.

"When he started singing, Levon changed the Armenian way of life," says retired dancer **Garbis Popjyan**. "People used to listen only to Turkish music before him. From then on, they listened only to him." In the 1960s, Popjyan was a member of a dance ensemble that traveled and performed with Katerjian on concert tours.

Katerjian says he has lost track of the number of albums he has recorded over his career. He estimates that he has released more than a dozen 45s and LP records and more than 20 cassettes. While one or two of his vinyls can still be found

on the Internet, three CDs are readily available on the market - a greatest-hits compilation, a collection of Sayat Nova songs, and the 2008 album.

A renewed message

Katerjian's latest release, titled *Let Us Speak Armenian: My Message to the New Generation*, features songs of various themes, ranging from the celebratory to the plaintive and even the didactic.

As Katerjian plays the CD on a small stereo, he sings along for added emphasis. It is clear that he takes great pride in his use of Armenian instruments, influences, words, and melodies - all of which, he says, Armenian musicians take for granted these days. He adds that the rhythms of his songs are

Continued on page C4

Legend

History knows no age

Continued from page C3

based on the Kochari model, “so that we can preserve the dance, instead of listening to the Turkish rhythms that are popular today.”

The album even offers a birthday song, an upbeat dance tune recorded with traditional instruments. Katerjian says he hopes the song will catch on with kids and adults alike, whose birthday-song repertoire rarely includes an Armenian version.

For the recording of the album, Katerjian worked with **Sarkis Gharibyan**, a musician, arranger, and producer from Iran who was a fan of his years before they ever met. “Levon does not perform for anybody; he just feels the music,” Gharibyan says. “When we are in the studio, there is not anybody to perform for.”

The two men worked together every day for six months to complete the ten-track CD. Katerjian wrote all of the music and lyrics for six of the songs, using poetry by renowned writers for the rest.

The first two songs of the album are about the murder of journalist and political activist Hrant Dink, who was assassinated in Istanbul in 2007. Like Armenians across the world, Katerjian says he was devastated by Dink’s loss. The heavy instrumentation of the two tracks, with their brass lines and taiko beats, symbolize the Armenian people’s fury at Dink’s death, Katerjian explains.

“Recording the Hrant Dink songs was a very powerful experience,” Gharibyan recalls. “Levon came in with the songs after hearing of the murder.... With every chord we wrote and every time he sang the song, he was furious. He really felt the story behind it.”

Creativity meets conviction

Katerjian’s creativity shows no signs of slowing down. “I have 500 songs waiting.... They will make your head spin,” he says as he points to a two-foot-tall stack of notebooks and papers on a chair. “These are all songs waiting to be recorded.”

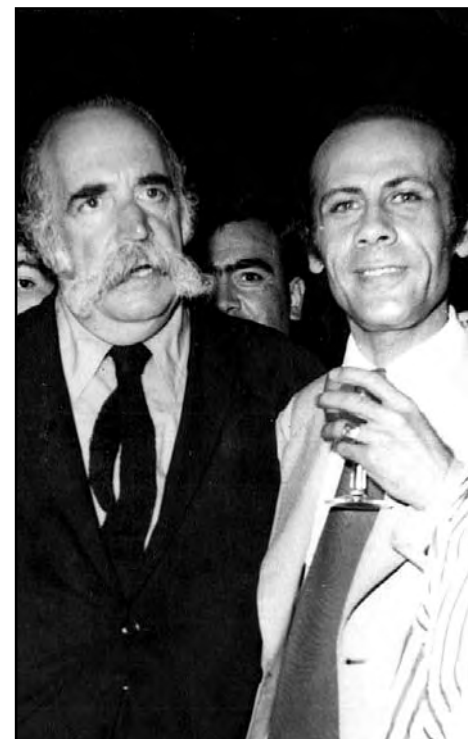
Many of the hundreds of Katerjian’s recorded songs are now performed by renowned singers such as **Hovhannes Badalyan**, **Astghik Kamalyan**, and **Ofelia Hambartsumyan**. Validation of this order underscores Katerjian’s dedication to a certain musical purity and also his profound disdain for certain trends in Armenian music. He sounds terribly annoyed at even the thought of rabiz music. “Those rabiz songs have nothing to do with us,” he says with a dismissive wave. “They use Turkish beats with nonsense lyrics and call it Armenian music.... I am tired of those!”

“I am so happy that folk music is making some progress in Armenia,” Katerjian adds and says he feels gratified by the growing phenomenon of a new generation of singers building on the Armenian folk and troubadour legacies.

Indeed, Katerjian can be downright fanatical in his devotion to his craft. To illustrate this, he recalls a 1989 concert in Buenos Aires. Minutes before he took the stage, he says, the electricity went



Left: Levon Katerjian accepting a lifetime achievement award at the 2006 Armenian Music Awards from Stepan Partamian. Far left: Katerjian. Below left: Performing Sayat Nova. Below: With William Saroyan in Fresno.



Performing in the 1980s.

out. While the confused audience wondered if the concert would have to be canceled, Katerjian jumped onto the stage and started to perform anyway, without a microphone - or lights. Luckily, he says, candles were lit, helping him to continue to sing and dance.

“For me, singing is like drinking water - very natural,” he notes matter-of-factly.

His own source

Katerjian credits his mother for instilling in him an early appreciation of the great Armenian troubadours and folk musicians, such as Sayat Nova and Gomidas. “She taught me about my culture and its songs,” he says.

Katerjian, who was born and raised in Aleppo, began to sing in church at age 9.

He went on to perform at various public events, including a community picnic when he sang in front of 10,000 people.

In 1960, he moved to Lebanon to attend the Lebanon Public University of Music, where he took vocal classes and majored in opera. His career took off immediately after graduation, with concert tours throughout the Middle East and eventually the United States, Canada, and South America.

After releasing a number of 45s and LPs in Lebanon, Katerjian became perhaps the first diaspora singer to be invited to perform in Soviet Armenia. In addition, his concerts led to a number of recordings for Armenia’s prestigious Melodia label.

“It wasn’t about money or selling re-

ords,” Katerjian says. “There was no money there; only art.” Since then, he has returned to Armenia nearly 20 times and performed in a string of memorable concerts, including a 1987 benefit event on the occasion of Sayat Nova’s 275th birthday, held at the Aram Khachaturian Philharmonic Hall.

“It was Levon who introduced and spread those *ashugh* songs across the world,” says **Vahe Atchabahian**, a member of the Nor Serount Cultural Association. “The world began to like these songs more and he reinforced the tie to the Armenian spirit.”

Though he sings frequently about love and family, Katerjian has never married and does not have children - something he does not discuss except to say, “God wanted me to spend my life spreading the Armenian song and culture.” With pride, he describes numerous instances of meeting Armenians around the world, people who have approached him, to tell him they would not have learned about their own culture if not for his music. “Even though I have never been married, I feel I have thousands of children around the world that I’ve helped to stay Armenian,” he says.

Katerjian has no plans to retire anytime soon. Neither does he believe in a “defeatist attitude” regarding old age. “It was not until I was 50 years old that I knew what life was about,” he says. “There is still plenty of life to live, plenty of soul and love.”

George Duran takes your favorite dish and twists it Venezuelan-Armenian chef publishes first cookbook



by **Lola Koundakjian**

NEW YORK – Trust Chef Duran with your taste buds! If you use your oven to store your sweaters, or cook strictly comfort foods, George Duran is on a mission to take your favorite dish and twist it into something that is, well, epicurean.

With his debut book, *Take this Dish and Twist It: Comfort Goods With New and Unexpected Flavors*, Chef Duran, aka George Kevork Guldalian, is enchanting cooks throughout the nation as he offers a wealth of inventive dishes.

Born in Caracas, Duran began experimenting in his family's kitchen, where he and his siblings tried to outdo each other and impress their mother. Asked if he ever twisted Armenian traditional dishes, Duran answered that in fact they experimented with many of them. The one that won the most praise was the Christmas choreg, which they made with chocolate chips. It was an instant hit.

Duran moved to the United States to study communications at New York University. As host of the *HYE Time* radio show on WNYU, he won the 1996 award for Best Radio Talk Show from the National Association of College Broadcasters. This reporter was one of the interviewees during a show.

After broadening his media experience at WABC radio, Duran moved into television, working in the production of MTV's *House of Style*. Fluent in Spanish, he then moved to the Latin music television station HTV, where he hosted shows such as *Top 21 Videos of 2001* and *Pachanga!* in Miami.

Asked how he decided to switch to his other love, cooking, Duran said he had had a passion for TV for a very long time, but it is such a diverse environment that he didn't know what he wanted to concentrate on. He was always a fan of the Food Network, and decided to continue his studies and become a professional chef.

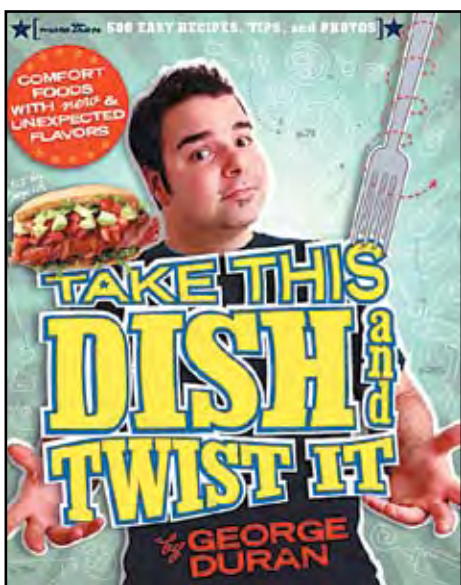
Duran decided to specialize in French cuisine because he knew the language, had friends in France, and knew that a degree in French cuisine would serve him well. "It teaches you the basics and allows you to refine your skills," he said. "There's nothing like learning French cuisine in Paris."

His family's reaction when he announced that he wanted to become a chef was a classic one: "Women work in the kitchen; we want you to be a lawyer or a doctor." It took a lot of convincing, but when Duran's mom started tasting his food, he had her full support.

While appearing on France's *Pop Cuisine*, which was nominated for a 7 d'Or (French Emmy) Best Cable Show Award



Chef Duran. Photos: Pam Francis.



and won the 2003 Silver Grape Gastronomic Award, Duran demonstrated how to make everyday French food with ingredients found at any supermarket. His semi-homemade recipes became an instant success. Duran has also written culinary articles for the French edition of *FHM* magazine.

Although his family still maintains bases in Caracas and Boston, Duran decided to return to New York City, where he became the host of the Food Network show *Ham on the Street*. Currently he hosts *The Secret Life of...*

I asked the chef what brought about recipes such as "Balsamic Roasted Brus-

sels Sprouts." Duran said he always wanted to come up with something that kids usually hate and twist it to make them love it. Duran came up with ideas using broccoli and Brussels sprouts and made them palatable to kids. He dares anyone to make that recipe and not end up loving Brussels sprouts. Dare taken.

I asked Duran about his book's target readership. He said he wants to reach the young and hip "and anyone else who is scared of cooking."

In *Take this Dish and Twist It*, which includes more than 100 recipes and is chock-full of anecdotes and advice on how to avoid common kitchen disasters, Chef Duran also offers a list of favorite gadgets and a top-10 list of essential pantry ingredients. The recipes have humorous names such as "Rise and Dine" - a morning dish consisting of French toast, frittata, and spinach breakfast pizza; "Eat with Your Hands" - an ensemble of finger foods

and sandwiches; and "Grillin' with a Villain" - baby back ribs and kebabs. For dessert, he suggests "Sweet Endings" - chocolate-strawberry quesadillas.

I asked Chef Duran how one should choose the right wine for the right course. "At the restaurant," he said, "always ask the sommelier and the chef." Note: wine is not always good when it's expensive. To choose the right wine outside of a restaurant, word of mouth is best. Chef Duran believes there is no need to drink wines that cost more than \$20 a bottle. These days, Duran is enjoying the Spanish riojas. "They have a European allure for the right price," he said.

Asked if he has any recommendations for the Average Armenian Guy who wants to impress his Woman, "It's easy" was the answer. "Make her the chocolate soup recipe or the chocolate soufflé. Anything chocolate and you've won her over."

As for some of us who know only how to boil water, I asked the chef if he had any recipes with just five ingredients. He said he had an excellent one with only two: dark chocolate sprinkled over orange slices. Eat the chocolate piece first, then cleanse the palate with the orange. Sounds like heaven to me.

Take this Dish and Twist It: Comfort Goods With New and Unexpected Flavors (Meredith Books. ISBN: 978-0-696-23943-4) is filled with more than 100 "terrifically twisted" recipes from George Duran's kitchen, along with extremely helpful tips, how-tos, a list of unique gadgets that'll help any cook, and anecdotes from George's culinary travels. ☞

connect:

www.georgeduran.com



J. Michael Hagopian's *The River Ran Red* premieres at Arpa International Film Festival

Final film in Genocide trilogy

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. – Culminating more than 40 years of interviews with 400 eyewitnesses to the Armenian Genocide of 1915, documentarian **J. Michael Hagopian** has completed the final film in his “The Witnesses” trilogy, *The River Ran Red*. The 60-minute documentary premieres at the Arpa International Film Festival on October 24 at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood, four days after Hagopian’s 95th birthday.

The River Ran Red is the epic search for survivors of the Armenian Genocide along the Euphrates, which snakes from the Armenian Plateau in Turkey to Syria. From his archives of 400 testimonies of survivors and eyewitnesses, Hagopian weaves a compelling story of terrifying intensity and resounding warmth. The search concludes with the discovery and testimony of the last three survivors, among several thousand, who had been stuffed into a burning cave in the forbidden desert of Der Zor.

“If I succeed in translating to the viewer the experience and the pathos of those Armenians who were deported from their homes and made it to the Euphrates River only to witness the worst

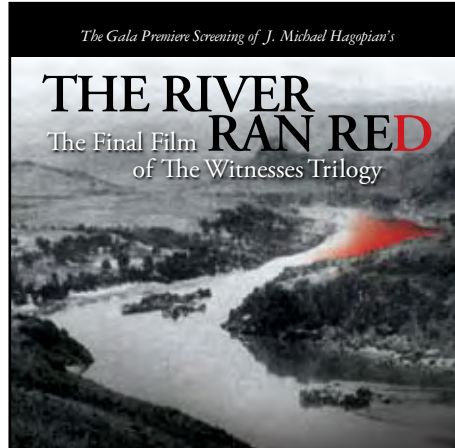
kind of bloodshed, then I accomplished what I set out to do,” says Hagopian, who wrote and produced the film.

Hagopian’s search for survivors took him to 13 different countries on five continents over a period of four decades. He recorded such compelling accounts as that of the priest who returns to his birthplace and meets the man who killed his father and other family members, and those of people who reported seeing hundreds of bodies floating down what they described as the bloody waters of the Euphrates River.

Hagopian was honored with the Arpa Lifetime Achievement Award and the Armin T. Wegner Humanitarian Award in 2006. He also is the recipient of Jewish World Watch’s I Witness Award for dedicating his professional life to chronicling the history of the Armenian people and commemorating victims of the Armenian Genocide.

“We are so pleased to have this opportunity to show Dr. Hagopian’s documentary,” says Arpa Film Festival founder **Sylvia Minassian**. “He is an amazing man.”

Hagopian himself is a Genocide survivor. As a young boy, he was hidden in a well in a mulberry grove to escape Turkish marauders and later fled, with his family, to the United States, where he eventually earned a Ph.D. from Harvard University,



Poster for *The River Ran Red*.

in 1943. He started collecting film footage about Armenians early on in his 60-year career as a documentary filmmaker, and he established the Armenian Film Foundation in 1979 with the help of several community leaders, with the aim of preserving the visual and personal histories of the witnesses of the Genocide.

“Since we started the foundation, our mission has been to serve as the primary motion-picture resource bank of Armenian-Genocide footage for public television, educational institutions, and film and television producers worldwide,” Hagopian says. “Now that we have finished ‘The Witnesses’ trilogy, we are going to turn our attention to digitizing our film

footage so that the survivor and witness interviews will be preserved forever and stand as testament to the horrific events perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish government against the Armenian people.”

Hagopian has made over 70 educational films. Seventeen of those are about the Armenian people, including *The River Ran Red* and the definitive film on the Turkish massacre of Armenians in 1915, *The Forgotten Genocide*.

There is yet another film that Hagopian plans to make. “I have interviews with survivors of the 1892-95 massacres and of eyewitnesses to the burning of Smyrna,” he says. “There was a 30-year genocidal era in Ottoman Turkish history and that story needs to be told.”

connect:
www.armenianfilm.org
1-805-495-0717

The River Ran Red

Arpa International Film Festival opening night premiere.

Friday, October 24, 8:00 p.m.

Egyptian Theatre

6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif. 90028

Tickets: www.itsmyseat.com

Arpa salutes actress and activist Mary Apick

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. – The 11th Annual Arpa International Film Festival will honor award-winning actress and activist **Mary Apick** on Sunday, October 26.

The Arpa International Film Festival is produced by Arpa Foundation for Film, Music, and Art (AFFMA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to artists exploring issues of identity, multiculturalism, war, exile, genocide, and global empathy.

Each year, the festival recognizes individuals in the film industry with achievement and humanitarian awards. Apick (Arts & Culture, June 28, 2008) will receive the Arpa Foundation Award for her far-reaching humanitarian contributions. Additionally, the festival will be screening a revival of Apick’s controversial 1987 film, *Checkpoint*.

“I am very proud to be the recipient of the Arpa Foundation Award this year – named after the Arpa River of Armenia, a life-giving body of water,” Apick said. “Arpa’s high standards support the cultivation of cultural understanding and global empathy. The festival celebrates independent thought, artistic vision, and diversity through the art of cinema. In today’s world, we are very well aware of cinema’s power to expand culture towards equality and peace. I share Arpa’s vision.”

Apick began her career as a child performer in Iran. A second-generation actress, she is the daughter of acclaimed actress **Apick Youssefian**. By the age 12, Mary Apick was performing in political and satirical sketches that helped change and liberalize Iranian society.



Mary Apick.

She became one of the country’s most popular stars, appearing on TV as well as in feature films and plays. Among the many awards she received was the Moscow Film Festival Best Actress Award for *Dead End*, which made her the first actress from Iran (and Asia in general) to receive such an honor.

The Iranian Revolution forced Apick to flee her country and move to America. As a graduate of the BBC School of TV Production, she attended the master’s degree program in directing at Cal Arts, and participated in the very first Sundance Institute with Robert Redford. Her credits include performances in the critically acclaimed film *The Mission* and the NBC miniseries *On Wings of Eagles*. Apick also produced the MGM film *Mind Games*.

While working with partner and prolific filmmaker **Bob Yari** (producing the Academy Award-winning film

Crash), Apick continued to stage socially significant theatrical projects. In 2005, she wrote and starred in two politically charged plays that were presented at the Los Angeles Theater Festival. *Beneath the Veil* became a Critic’s Choice and is slated for production in several cities, including Los Angeles, in 2009.

Apick has also created numerous children’s videos, such as *A Fairy Tale in the Forest* and *Jewel of the Night*, which give children of Iranian expatriates the opportunity to learn about their parents’ culture and homeland.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, Apick traveled through the United States, Europe, and Australia, starring in 400 stage performances of the poetic political play *The Ass* by award-winning filmmaker **Parviz Sayyad** (director of *The Mission* and *Checkpoint*).

One of Apick’s lifelong passions has been to help improve conditions for women and children around the world, especially in the Middle East. She has appeared as a spokesperson before the U.S. Congress, and her vigilant voice has inspired generation after generation to continue its pursuit of all freedoms.

“Mary Apick is an actress and activist who exerts herself to improve conditions of the world for all people,” said AFFMA founder **Sylvia Minassian**, commenting on the announcement of Apick’s Arpa Foundation Award. “She is most deserving of such an honor,” Minassian added. “Our vision for global empathy goes hand in hand with the

presentation and the revival of her film *Checkpoint*.”

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1-323-663-1882

Checkpoint

Saturday, October 25, at 3:15 p.m.

Egyptian Theatre

6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90028

Released in 1987 movie *Checkpoint* is an independent, thought-provoking film exploring a 24-hour period in the lives of several Iranian and American students from Michigan State University in 1980.

“Their lives change when their visas expire during travels,” Mary Apick explains. “Due to the Iranian hostage crisis during President Carter’s administration, a crucial time in history that changed the world immensely, they question their own human-rights issues.”

Checkpoint will screen in a program that includes two new films about contemporary Iranian issues: *Young Roots* and *Listen to Iran’s People: A Call for Peace*. After the screening, Apick will take part in a discussion and Q & A about the film and her career. The session will be moderated by **Lucy Der-Tavitian**, host and producer of KPFFK 90.7 FM Pacifica Radio’s South West Asia and North Africa collective.

Fables and Foibles



reviewed
by Aram
Kouyoumdjian

What happens when a theater takes a handful of traditional Armenian fables and dramatizes them with a modern, irreverent sensibility? If the fables are by Hovhannes Toumanyan and the staging is at Luna Playhouse, a delightful production emerges. To be sure, the pastiche billed as “From Toumanyan’s World” is rather rough around the edges, but it is altogether astute (thanks to healthy doses of surreal humor) and brims with energy (thanks to a spirited cast). The novel show, which had a too-short run earlier this month, has fortunately added matinee performances (at 11:00 a.m.) on Sundays, October 26 and November 2.

Toumanyan, who composed his narrative poems and short stories in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was among the writers who made Tiflis (the now-troubled Georgian capital, Tbilisi) a center of Armenian intellectual life at the time. Toumanyan’s work is remarkably simple but never simplistic, especially when it serves as satire of human foibles. For instance, one of his masterworks, “A Drop of Honey,” describes how an utterly benign incident leads to unbridled bloodshed. Although it is a comic composition, it doubles as allegory in its condemnation of senseless killing and war. (In *Sojourn at Ararat*, the poem takes on unexpected potency as the lead-in to a segment on the Genocide).

At Luna, director Aramazd Stepanian’s eager cast acts out the poem as a choral piece, with Stepanian himself providing vigorous narration. The staging delivers laughs by punching up the poem’s farcical elements while downplaying any tragic undercurrent. In this vein, it maintains a steady pace and tone, even though the ever-escalating conflict in the poem demands a corresponding build-up in the performance.

The comedy takes on an absurdist quality in “The Stupid Man,” which recounts the titular character’s journey to see God and express his grievances. When he finally reaches heaven, he encounters a God who bears a strange resemblance to the Godfather (thanks to Stepanian channeling Brando). God promises the stupid man good fortune and actually hands it to him on a flash drive. True to his name, however, the stupid man fails to realize the bounty he has been given and proceeds to meet an entirely *unfortunate* demise, ending up as a meal for a hungry wolf.

Tigran Kirakosyan gleefully devours his role as the wolf and goes on to ex-

Aram Kouyoumdjian is the winner of Elly Awards for both playwriting (*The Farewells*) and directing (*Three Hotels*). His latest work is *Velvet Revolution*.



Eleanora Khachatryan mourning her imaginary son in “The Death of Kikos.”



Tigran Kirakosyan as a hungry wolf in “The Stupid Man.”

hibit superior talent as a funnyman in his portrayal of myriad characters, including Ousta Piso in “The Dog and the Cat.” There, he puts on an impressive display of physicalized movement as he teams up with Ashot Tadevosian to perform Toumanyan’s rhymes as rap rhythms. Tadevosian proves particularly adept at pulling off this inspired bit of bravura.

By the time the show gets to “The Death of Kikos,” the hysterics are in full swing. In that story, a young woman sitting underneath a tree conceives the thought that Kikos, the son she imagines having in the future, will climb up

the tree and fall to his death. In ridiculous fashion, she begins mourning the death of this nonexistent child, and is soon joined by her entire family (including her iPod-addicted sister) in planning his funeral. The piece is performed in fittingly exaggerated style, and when Lyudmila Grigoryan, grandmother to the “dead” Kikos, begins wailing, the lunacy turns downright sidesplitting.

Props go to a cast that tackles the show’s challenges with gusto. While several members of the ensemble are obviously inexperienced, they acquit themselves by reveling in the material. A few of the vignettes themselves would bene-



Lyudmila Grigoryan in “Paregentanuh.”



Aramazd Stepanian and Pyuzant Azizyan in “From Toumanyan’s World.”



Eleanora Khachatryan and Ashot Tadevosian in “The Stupid Man.”

fit from some tweaking, including “Paregentanuh,” which falls relatively flat, as do the stories that are simply read (sans staging) at the outset of each act. Overall, however, “From Toumanyan’s World” enlivens our literary tradition in a way that is essential to its survival.

Ensuring that survival will be the appreciable number of children – the most honest of critics – who were in the audience for this family-friendly show the night I saw it. They were neither fidgety nor restless. They sat, smiling and rapt, relishing Toumanyan’s magical words within a context to which they could relate.

allegory+motif

KOKO: at the intersection of art and architecture



by Marina Terteryan

LA CANADA, Calif. – For artist Koko Hovaguimian, the intersection of art and architecture contains a mix of gothic undertones, metaphorical quirks, and unexpected tributes to the great masters of art. In his latest exhibit, “Allegory + Motif,” at Stephanie’s Gallery in La Canada, Hovaguimian explores the fusion of form, structure, and symbolism, all in the context of his formative artistic experiences in New York, where he spent a year studying architecture.

After taking private art lessons throughout his grade-school years, Hovaguimian developed a fascination for the world of architecture. His fondness led him to study architecture at Woodbury University (in Burbank, California), where he received a BA in 2006.

“For me it was interesting to see architecture as it would influence my artwork and vice versa,” he said. And that influence has remained resilient as he developed both crafts simultaneously.

“A lot of architecture is not so much about building but developing ideas,” he said, adding that his architectural training has enabled him to create the core concepts of his artworks. But even with the freedom of creating ideas for a space, there are inherent limitations to architectural design, such as the need for structure, which he didn’t have to face in painting. While artistic processes, such as the use of digital media, to design and showcase ideas are an important aspect of the modern practice of architecture, Hovaguimian said he enjoys doing things with paint that he can’t do with architecture.

“I like this blurring of boundaries, landscape, background,” he said. “They don’t need to be defined specifically. In architecture they do; there are more constraints. But in art there aren’t. It’s sort of like a playground to do that – where there are no building codes... It’s a way to distort freely.”

The Big Apple experience

In 2007, Hovaguimian earned an MS in advanced architectural design from Columbia University in New York. While studying there, he became intrigued by the city’s culture and atmosphere. “The city has an energy - something different, particularly this notion of the collective,” he said. “You cannot know anybody but never feel alone there. It’s really odd and fascinating,” he said and added that he never actually felt alone in New York because of the close bond he formed with the students in his program.

“I’ve been interested in developing more of these ideas of the city and its influences on people,” he explained, referring to the themes in his “Allegory + Motif” series. “A lot of it comes from my Armenian heritage as well: in the di-



Left: Manhattan scene.
Below left: Portrait of young prince David.
Below: Nassau's Hudson.



aspora you see the different influences that the city can have on people” in different parts of the world.

“In this work, I think Koko is trying to show that people are not alone. [They] are nothing by themselves and they are at their best interacting with other people,” said Linda Stepanian, owner/director of Stephanie’s Gallery and Hovaguimian’s manager. “If you notice, the faces of the people are not defined. That means the importance is not in the specific details but what [they] are surrounded by.”

Some notable motifs

Dark, deep hues used generously on the canvases are complemented by splashes of color. A common theme in the series is the Gothic arch, a key element in medieval European architecture. Hovaguimian uses it in unexpected places, independent of the cathedral structures the figure usually appears on. He first became interested in the pointed Gothic archway when looking at cathedrals in New York and noticing the juxtaposition of “these really heavy bunkers in the city of glass skyscrapers.” This motif

repeats throughout various works in the series.

Hovaguimian’s tongue-in-cheek humor is showcased in a piece titled “Couple Holding Hands.” Upon first glance, it is an older couple, the woman against a background of fiery red and the man against one of matted earth tones. But the face of the woman is actually a copy of Leonardo da Vinci’s Virgin Mary, and the man is a copy of a Rembrandt self-portrait. “This is sort of Leonardo

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Emancipating art from intellectualization

A recent exhibition in Yerevan features cutting-edge works by three generations of artists

YEREVAN – Promoting “unadulterated artistic expression” was the goal of a recent month-long exhibition at the Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (ACCEA) in Yerevan.

Curator **Sonia Balassanian**, founder and senior artistic director of the ACCEA, says she “invited artists to try to create art stemming from their very personal feelings and experiences, rather than following ‘common knowledge’ and socially accepted paradigms.”

What resulted was “Undercurrent Shifts,” this year’s group exhibition of contemporary art at the ACCEA. Balassanian has been organizing and curating similar shows annually in Armenia since 1992.

Presented to the public were a wide range of media: painting, sculpture, installation, video art, performance, and combinations of two or more.

Balassanian says the exhibition was multilayered and rich, with many latent and overt parables and metaphors.

According to the curator, some of the works were “introverted” or autobiographical stories dealing with personal issues and private feelings and preferences. Other works focused on larger issues of global significance.

“Artists are assumed to reflect upon their inner feelings and first-hand experiences in a direct and unsolicited manner, without external influences,” Balassanian says. “However, this is not always the case. There are many ‘external’ elements which consciously or subconsciously impact on artists’ work.”

Religion and politics are two examples, according to Balassanian, that tend to place restrictions, “moral or otherwise,” on people’s behavior and modes of social interaction.

“Mass media and propaganda machines are geared to disseminating and imposing set visions of the world,” she says. “As a result, an individual member of society, who may be of a different



Arthur Sarkissian, *Closed Session*, Mixed media installation, 2007.



Sonia Balassanian, *Flock*, Mixed media installation, 2008.



Arpa Hacopian, *You Are Inside*, Interactive Installation, 2008.

and environmental issues which grind on artists’ psyches. Subjects included economic inequity and freedom of expression and association.

Arthur Sarkissian’s work, “Closed Session,” consisted of a row of seven chairs, each sitting on four lit light bulbs. Balassanian says Sarkissian’s work is a satirical reference to self-aggrandizing decision-makers, detached from the citizens for whom they make decisions.

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Hamlet Hovsepyan, *The Cow* (detail), Mixed media installation, 1986-2001.

creed or conviction, is forced to endure hardship imposed on him by standards and mores which are not necessarily of his choice, preference, personal belief, or code of ethics.”

In “Undercurrent Shifts,” the audience saw the concept of self-sacrifice versus selfish posture of sacrificing others, rebellious outburst versus psychology of sheepish obedience.

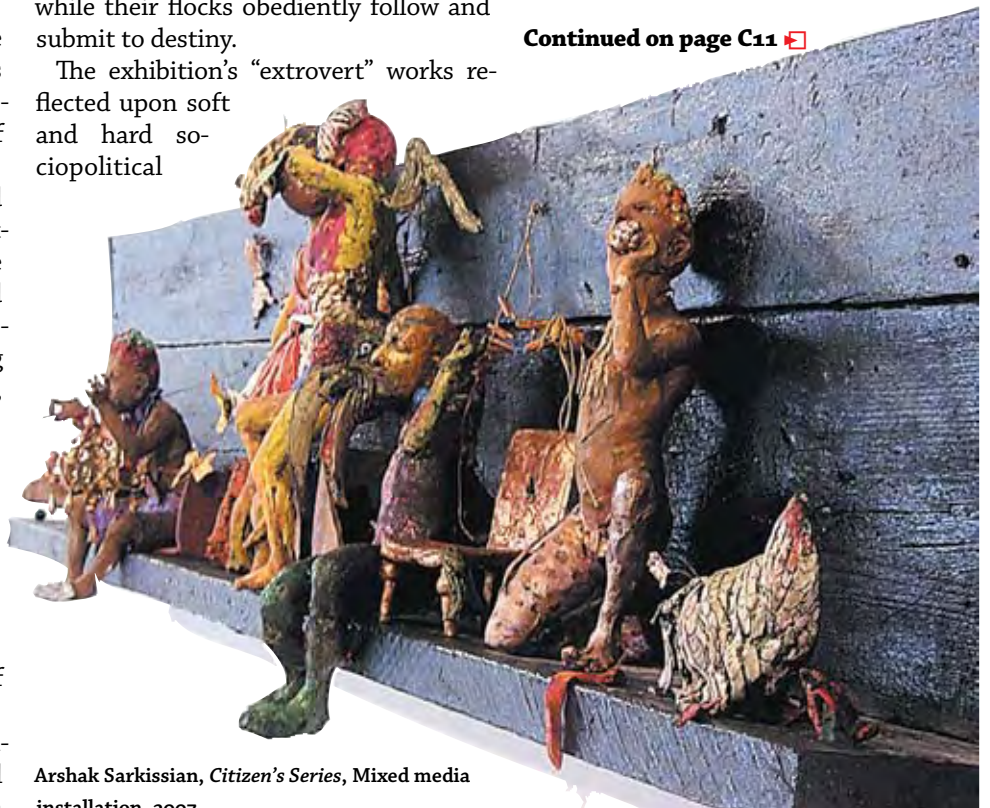
Teni Vartanyan, an accomplished painter, was one of the participating artists. Her installation was a huge structure covered with withered flowers collected from tombstones. A distorted video projection depicted the process of collecting the flowers. To some who saw the work, the work conveyed the sad feeling of futility and never-to-return bygone.

Balassanian also participated in the exhibition, with a mixed-media installation. Seven glittering bronze casts of heads of sacrificed lambs were installed on walls, and small-screen video projections continuously showed moving and mooing herds of cattle and flocks of lambs.

For the artist, her installation symbolizes warship and sacrifice, as well as a sense of helplessness. Balassanian

draws parallel with the Golden Lamb from Greek mythology and its symbolism of woe, heartache, and murderous vengeance exacted by mindless leaders, while their flocks obediently follow and submit to destiny.

The exhibition’s “extrovert” works reflected upon soft and hard sociopolitical



Arshak Sarkissian, *Citizen's Series*, Mixed media installation, 2007.

	20 October	21 October	22 October	23 October	24 October	25 October	26 October
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
EST							
PST							
22:00	Bumerang	Bumerang	Drop Of Honey	Drop Of Honey	Discovery	Discovery	Dar
22:30	Armenian Wedding	Armenian Wedding	Armenian Wedding	PS Club	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program
23:00	Blitz	Blitz	Blitz	Blitz	Blitz	Blitz	Blitz
23:30	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE
0:30	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards
1:30	Armenian	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Armenian
2:30	Movie	Harevaner	Harevaner	Harevaner	Harevaner	Harevaner	Movie
3:30	PS CLUB	Gyanki Keene	Gyanki Keene	Gyanki Keene	Jagadakri kerinere	Jagadakri kerinere	Jagadakri kerinere
4:00	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program
4:30	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Express	Express
5:00	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	The Armenian	The Armenian
6:00	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave
7:00	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards
8:00	PS CLUB	Gyanki Keene	Gyanki Keene	Gyanki Keene	Jagadakri kerinere	Jagadakri kerinere	Jagadakri kerinere
8:30	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program
9:00	Armenian Wedding	Armenian Wedding	Armenian Wedding	Boomerang	Boomerang	A Drop of Honey	A Drop of Honey
9:30	Weekend News	News	News	News	News	News	Weekend News
10:00	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE
11:00	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Fathers & Sons	Fathers & Sons
12:00	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Tele Kitchen	Express	Express
12:30	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave	Like A Wave
13:30	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	Bumerang	Bumerang
14:00	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards	Snakes & Lizards
15:00	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE	CLONE
16:00	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Unlucky Happiness	Armenian	Dar
16:30						Movie	Discovery
17:00	Harevaner	Harevaner	Harevaner	Harevaner	Harevaner		A Drop Of Honey
18:00	News	News	News	News	News	News	Weekend News
18:30	Gyanki Keene	Gyanki Keene	Gyanki Keene	Jagadakri kerinere	Jagadakri kerinere	Jagadakri kerinere	PS Club
19:15	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Cool Program	Armenian
19:40	Bernard Show	Bernard Show	Bernard Show	Bernard Show	Bernard Show	Bernard Show	Wedding
20:30	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	Bari Luys	The Armenian	The Armenian
21:30	News	News	News	News	News	News	Weekend News

KOKO: at the intersection of art and architecture

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and Rembrandt holding hands,” Hovaguimian said with a smirk. “It has a bit of humor for me but no one would ever know unless they were really familiar with those works.”

Another tribute to da Vinci is found in the work “Leonardo’s Blind Horse,” in which a tall, proud equine stands on a dark-red background near a Gothic arch. The horse is similar to da Vinci’s anatomical sketches of people and animals, but Hovaguimian has added a twist by making it blind.

Music is another major element in Hovaguimian’s work, especially in paintings that feature musicians and instruments. A classically trained pianist, Hovaguimian has always admired music, particularly the cello. “I’m so jealous of cellists because that’s the one instrument I’ve always wanted to learn,” he said. “Most of the piano pieces I wanted to play were the accompaniments to cello pieces.”

Finding his style

In a gradual departure from his earlier works, which tend heavily toward the abstract, Hovaguimian has developed a signature style that increasingly makes use of figurative imagery.

“His work is very contemporary,” Stepanian said. “When you look at the picture, you can find the message right away. It’s not a complete abstract. I love the imminent energy of the paintings.”

There are no direct Armenian references in Hovaguimian’s work, though he said he is often told of noticeable cultural reflections in some of his paintings. “I’ve been hearing a lot of it from people,” he



Self portrait



Splitting Monument.



Leonardo’s Blind Horse.

said and added that he has been influenced by certain Armenian artists and pieces of music. “You can’t escape it,” he noted. “It’s in the blood and it definitely comes out in

my work.” As a pianist, Hovaguimian greatly enjoyed playing pieces by Aram Khachaturian and other Armenian composers. This, he said, along with attending an Armenian school,

has kept him close to his heritage.

Artistic influences, however, have been more subtle. “Is it cliché to say Arshile Gorky? Everyone says Arshile Gorky. Maybe it is too cliché,” he laughed. “My work doesn’t look like his. But what he did in the art world was amazing.”

Architect by day, painter by night

Hovaguimian’s “day job” is working full-time as a junior architect for a firm owned by Frank Gehry, the renowned architect whose credits include Los Angeles’ Walt Disney Concert Hall. Having art pieces in his architecture portfolio doesn’t hurt, Hovaguimian said. He has yet to see which profession will influence the other more, but for now he juggles both by working during the day and painting “late nights so it works perfect. That’s the best time because everyone’s asleep... the city’s all quiet.”

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allegory+motif

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Satellite Broadcast Program Grid

20 – 26 October



20 October		21 October		22 October		23 October		24 October		25 October		26 October	
MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST
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experimental

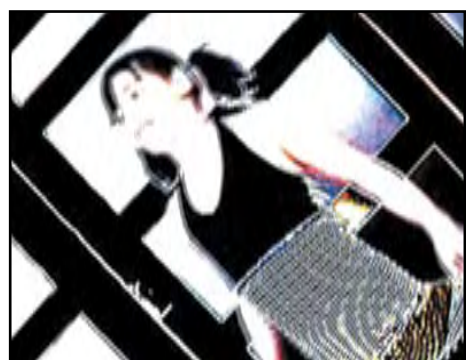
Emancipating art from intellectualization

Continued from page C9

Artists **David Kareyan** and **Diana Hagopian**, a couple that creates joint installations, presented a mud-covered wall with two peepholes, which a viewer would have to bend down to see through. Behind each hole was a television screen that played an image of a woman and a child at play, respectively. Next to the wall were several muddy women's evening gowns swinging gently from clothes-hangers.

Two of the younger-generation artists, **Tigran Arakelyan**, 16, and **Sargis Hovhannisyan**, 22, offered a structure made from drinking straws. It resembled a husky but totally transparent and lightweight mass, perhaps a man, standing in the middle of the gallery.

Hovhannisyan presented a number of miniature cardboard cutouts of various size squares, representing windows that were spread on the floor in a corner of the exhibition space. Cardboard



Far left: **Teni Vartanyan, Havak-Arar**, mixed media installation, 2008. Left: **Davit Kareyan and Dian Hakopian, Black and More**, mixed media installation, 2008. Below: **Tigran Arakelyan, Untitled**, Installation, 2008.

figurines and objects popped out of these windows.

Balassanian says she brought together three generations of contemporary artists for this exhibition. She explains that, since 1992, the ACCEA's group shows have featured more-experienced and established as well as young and up-and-coming artists. The center's goal is to facilitate transfer of skill, experience, and mastery to the young artists, without inhibition or the stigma of teacher-student or master-disciple relationships. ■

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