

Polad Bülbüloglu

Candidate for Director-General of UNESCO

2017

Biography

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OVERVIEW

Polad Bülbüloğlu, born in Baku (Azerbaijan) in 1945, is a public servant and statesman with a long and distinguished record in the spheres of cultural management and international diplomacy, and a particular interest in resolving humanitarian issues. He is also a renowned musician on the world stage who has performed in more than 70 countries spanning a career over five decades.

As Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan (1988-2006) he successfully oversaw the creation and development of the country's independent cultural policy, and worked with such institutions as the Council of Europe's Department of Cultural Policy, the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research, and UNESCO.

Polad Bülbüloğlu has also been a leading member in international cultural organisations. As Deputy Chair of the National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO (1994-2006), he headed the Azerbaijani Delegation at the 31st (2001), 32nd (2003) and 33rd (2005) sessions of the UNESCO General Conference. A founder of the International Organisation of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), he served as the Organisation's Director-General for 14 years (1994-2008) and established its ties with UNESCO. Since 2009, he has served as Chairman of the Board of the Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation (IFESCO) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Russian Federation in 2006, he work extensively in the humanitarian sphere, encouraging international cooperation and dialogue between nations, and promoting multiculturalism, education and the arts as powerful tools for peace.

Polad Bülbüloğlu has received numerous distinctions from both states and international organisations for his contributions to cultural and humanitarian development, peacemaking initiatives, and the arts.

BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION

Polad Bülbüloglu was born in Baku (Azerbaijan) in 1945, to the family of Murtuza Mammadov - a great Azerbaijani singer and musicologist. Trained in Azerbaijan and Italy, his father was one of the founders of the vocal arts and national musical theatre in Azerbaijan. The name Bülbül - 'nightingale' — was bestowed upon the popular singer for the beauty and purity of his voice. The artistry of Bülbül was unique in that he managed to perfect his skills in the European bel canto style without sacrificing the particularities of the mugham art form (inscribed in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2009, and originally proclaimed in 2003).

Growing up in such a rich cultural background was formative for Polad Bülbüloglu's development as an artist and culture promoter. Educated at the Special High School of the Hajibeyov Azerbaijan State Conservatory (1952-1963), he later studied composition at the Conservatory under the renowned composer Gara Garayev (1963-1968). Following the example of his famous father, he would go on to fuse elements of Western and Oriental art traditions in his work.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE

Chairman of the Board of the Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation (IFESCCO) of CIS (elected four times)

1987-1988	Director and Art Director of the Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall
1988-2006	Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan
1994-2006	Deputy Chair of the National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO
1994-2008	Director-General of the International Organisation of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) (elected four times)
1995-1998	Member of Milli Majlis (National Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan
2002-2004	Chairman of the Council on Cultural Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), at the level of Ministers of Culture
2006-present	Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Russian Federation
2009-present	Chairman of the Board of the Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation (IFESCCO) of CIS (elected four times)

Cultural Management

Appointed Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1988, Polad Bülbüloğlu proved himself an adept leader of cultural policy and programmes, as competent manager of sizable organisations with limited budgets and as well-recognized statesman. His 18 years in this function included the challenging transition to national independence, during which he oversaw the creation of the cultural policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Polad Bülbüloğlu was the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. From 1991 through 1996 he managed to save the country's cultural infrastructure with scarce resources and finances. Not a single museum, library, music school, theatre or cinematography ceased to exist. He managed a cultural system comprising 16.000 institutions with more than 72.000 employees.

Cooperation with European Institutions

During his time as Minister of Culture, Polad Bülbüloğlu expanded and developed Azerbaijan's international ties, closely managing the process of Azerbaijan's involvement in European and international institutions, as well as coordinating and carefully studying national cultural processes. One of the remarkable results of his activity was the survey "Cultural Policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan", prepared in 2000 within the framework of the Council of Europe's Department of Cultural Policy and the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts). This survey was unique in its systematization of cultural information, and was recognized as one of the most successful 'Cultural Policy in Europe' projects.

Involvement with UNESCO

From 1994-2006 he served as Deputy Chair of the National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO. Polad Bülbüloğlu was closely involved in developing relations with UNESCO, and realized joint projects on the occasion of remarkable anniversaries celebrated by UNESCO. In this connection, the Director-General of UNESCO Federico Mayor visited Baku in November 1996 upon the invitation of Polad Bülbüloğlu and participated in the events on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the birth of the poet Fuzuli - a major figure of Azerbaijani and

Eastern literature. Parallel events were also organized at UNESCO Headquarters. In 2000, UNESCO observed the 1300th anniversary of the epic “Kitabi of Dede Korkut” with an exhibition, symposium and concert held in Paris.

Polad Bülbüloğlu headed the Azerbaijani Delegation at the 31st (2001), 32nd (2003) and 33rd (2005) sessions of the UNESCO General Conference. In addition, he played an active role in discussions around cultural issues at the international level. In 1998 he delivered a speech at the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policy for Development in Stockholm, which initiated a new focus on culture as a driver of development. In 1999, he actively participated in the work of the 10th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation. In 2000, he attended the Round Table of Ministers of Culture of UNESCO Member States in Paris.

Under the auspices of UNESCO, Polad Bülbüloğlu organized and participated in various celebrations of the anniversaries of the great figures of the arts and sciences, such as the composer Qara Qarayev, chemist Yusif Mammadaliyev and writer Chinghiz Aitmatov.

Creating TURKSOY

In his capacity as a founder of the International Organisation of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), Polad Bülbüloğlu was not only the first Director-General of the Organisation for the first 14 years of its operation from 1994 to 2008, but also laid the foundations for its still-ongoing collaboration with UNESCO. The relevant Agreement was signed in Istanbul by himself and then UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor in June 1996. Four times elected as Director-General, TURKSOY provided under his leadership a new institutional framework for the cooperation and cultural interaction of Turkic-speaking peoples.

Building IFESCCO

Polad Bülbüloğlu has used his rich experience and authority to support and develop humanitarian cooperation amongst Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Members. He has taken on a leading role at the CIS Forum of Creative and Scientific Intellectuals, working on this annual event since 2006. The activities of the CIS Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation (IFESCCO) are also closely linked with Polad Bülbüloğlu, as he was elected four times as Chairman of the Board since 2009. Under his leadership, the Foundation has realized several projects, and a series of ongoing events were established. Among them are the Cultural Capital of the Commonwealth programme (in line with similar European and international initiatives), the annual Stars of the Commonwealth Award recognizing the efforts of artists and cultural workers, and the Commonwealth of Debuts Award for promising young specialists in the humanitarian sphere.

Diplomatic activity

Following his appointment as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Russian Federation in 2006, Polad Bülbüloğlu continued his work in the humanitarian sphere. He has contributed to the development of bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia in this area. He has devoted great efforts to the promotion of both the cultural elements of Azerbaijan on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the exceptional objects of the country's arts. Furthermore, he has given special attention to the development of cooperation in the field of education, among others actively contributing to the solution of problems faced by Azerbaijani students studying at Russian Universities. He also

helped to open regional branches of renowned Russian Universities in Baku, the first being a branch of the Moscow State University.

In 2010 Polad Bülbüloğlu was involved in the organisation of the first Azerbaijani-Russian Humanitarian Forum, held in Baku. The success of this event allowed to develop and broaden its scope, transforming it into the Baku International Humanitarian Forum, held annually since 2011 under the auspices of the Presidents of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. The five Forums held to date - with the participation of a diverse range of Nobel Laureates, renowned international experts in various spheres, political leaders, former heads of state and senior UNESCO representatives - have established Baku as an internationally-recognized platform for the promotion and scientific study of ideas relating to multiculturalism.

Polad Bülbüloğlu has been a regular participant in the work of the annual International Likhachov Scientific Conference, held in Saint Petersburg. His lectures at the Conference include "Azerbaijan at the Crossroads of the Dialogue of Cultures and Civilisations" (2009), "Understanding Global Contemporary Challenges and National Interests in the Republic of Azerbaijan" (2016) and, within the Diplomatic Programme, "The International Dialogue of Cultures: Global Context and the Participation of Azerbaijan".

Polad Bülbüloğlu has also dedicated himself to peacemaking initiatives with the participation of the intelligentsia, with the aim of establishing dialogue between the civil societies of Armenia and Azerbaijan. In 2007 and 2009 with his direct participation, and supported by his public authority, reciprocal visits of groups of Azerbaijani and Armenian intellectuals proved memorable, demonstrating that once political barriers have been eliminated and a resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict has been accomplished, both sides can enter into dialogue and peacefully coexist.

ARTISTIC CAREER

Polad Bülbüloğlu's impressive talents as a singer, musician and composer were apparent while still a student - blessed with a particular aptitude for contemporary music, clarity of voice, and a fine ear for form.

In 1965 he began performing, giving concerts in Azerbaijan and the USSR, and in more than 70 countries across the world. He pioneered a new form of Soviet stage performance, combining contemporary rhythms and melodies with rousing national music, inspiring a new generation of musicians in the process.

During the 1960s, his songs were performed by many world-famous singers, and his compositions for more than 20 feature films and numerous theatre performances brought him worldwide attention and fame. His film work as a screen actor in a number of key roles increased his popularity, and his stardom was sealed by his appearances on many primetime musical television programmes.

In 1969 he became a member of the USSR Union of Composers and the USSR Union of Cinematographers.

In 1975 he created the Azerbaijan State Stage Band and served as its Artistic Director until 1977. In 1981 he created the vocal-instrumental band "Ashiqlar", serving as its Artistic Director until 1987.

Since turning his attention to government service in 1988, and in spite of his busy schedule, Polad Bülbüloğlu still manages to find time to please his fans with major new works and live concert appearances.

His ballet 'Love and Death, written on the motifs of the epic 'Kitabi of Dede Korkut, premiered in 2005 at the Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre in Baku. In 2009 it was performed at the Yekaterinburg State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre in Russia, and in 2016 at the National Academic Grand Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus.

Recent highlights include his performances for the city of Derbend's 2000th anniversary celebrations, held under the auspices of UNESCO in 2015, as well as at the Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk International Arts Festival in 2016. Polad Bülbüloğlu was also invited to perform as a special guest at the 2016 edition of Vadim Repin's Trans-Siberian Art Festival in Novosibirsk.

Honours and Awards

Polad Bülbüloğlu has received many distinctions and honours throughout his artistic and political careers. They include:

1. Public Service

- Order of Honour of Georgia
- Turkish World Writers and Artists Association (TURKSAV) Award
- "Star of Creativity" Russian National People's Award
- Order of Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Order of Friendship of the Russian Federation
- "Om Emerit" Honour of the Republic of Moldova
- "The Rose of the World" Gold Medal, awarded jointly by UNESCO and the International Humanitarian Academy Europe-Asia
- National Award for Peace and Progress of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan
- "Magtymguly Pyragy" Medal of Turkmenistan
- Order of Glory of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Order of Honour of the Russian Federation
- Honourable Medal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
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2. Artistic Career

- Youth Award of the of Azerbaijan Republic
- Laureate of the televised Song of the Year festivals in 1972,1977,1978 and 1979.
- Honoured Art Worker of Azerbaijan
- People's Artist of Azerbaijan
- Certificates of Honour of the Chuvash and Mari Republics

- Doctor of Arts, Azerbaijan State Academy of Fine Arts
- Honorary Professor, Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Arts
- Professor of Music, Supreme Attestation Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan Polad Bülbüloglu's star unveiled at the Performers' Square in Moscow
- Honorary Member, Russian Academy of Arts
- Honorary Citizen of Tbilisi, Georgia
- "Through Art to Peace and Mutual Understanding" Special Award of the President of the Republic of Belarus
- Polad Bülbüloglu's name unveiled on the Vitebsk Walk of Fame
- Public Honorary "Ladoshki" Award of Childhood Appreciation
- Head of International Jury at "Slavansky Bazaar" Arts Festival in Vitebsk, Belarus

Publications

Numerous articles on Polad Bülbüloglu's wide-ranging activities in the political and diplomatic fields, and on his public life as an artist have been published in books, newspapers, periodicals and journals in Azerbaijan and across the world.

They include:

- Farhad Agamaliyev (1985). Polad Bülbüloglu. Baku: "Ishiq" Publishing House.
- Nushaba Ismayilova (2005). A Worthy Successor of the Great Talent. Baku: "Sada" Publishing House.
- Dmitry Grigoriev (2006). And I Will Be Surprised Again by the Sun. Saint Petersburg: Pechatniy Dvor Publishing House.