



*Telling Futures (acrylic)
by Karen Babayan*

Layered Lives: Iranian Armenian Identity through Contemporary Arts



Levon Chilingirian plays Ludwig Bazil

This project began with the fieldwork of SOAS anthropologists Dr. Abdollah Guivian and Veronica Castro, with Nayer Qajar in Iran. Working with Armenians in Tehran and elsewhere in Iran, they sought to understand how a minority people created a vibrant collective identity over generations. They were impressed by a number of Iranian Armenian artists and wished to bring them to London to show their art, expressing their thoughts on issues of identity. Guivian and Castro were also creating a documentary film, *Lullaby*, in which some of these same artists spoke about their lives and work.

In London they contacted the Armenian Institute, asking for assistance in bringing the project to fruition. In September 2005 we began to develop the initial ideas. Grant proposals were written and the project continued to evolve. The exhibition itself was



Painter Edman Aivazian

expanded to include Iranian Armenian artists living outside Iran to explore the connections between a people dispersed around the globe, and also to increase the range of artwork displayed – in terms of approaches, techniques and media and in terms of generational and diverse cultural influences. Nairi Sahakian, a curator and herself an Iranian Armenian, joined us bringing her twenty-plus years of professional experience. In addition to the planned films, poetry and hung art, the budget and time allowed only two additions: dance and music. Lectures provided information about the situation of Armenians in Iran over time. Workshops on a variety of subjects gave opportunities to people to enjoy “learning through doing” and the Oral History workshops marked the beginning of a longer term project of creating an archive of oral histories of Armenians in Britain with the aim of fitting into the ongoing collections of the British Library Sound Archives.



Painter Hermineh Keshish



Graphic artist Henrik Khatchatoorian

Highlights

The exhibition of contemporary Iranian Armenian arts, both from Iran and from the diaspora, was a “first” not only at the Brunei Gallery but in any major gallery in London. The combination of diaspora and “homeland” artists was well-received and provided a stimulating and artistically rewarding experience for the over 6,000 people who visited the exhibit. The Iranian artists themselves were pleased to take part in an exhibit that included well-known artists of the older generation whose influences had been strongly felt in Iran (see box on p.3). Artists and visitors from the diaspora were also very happy for the opportunity to meet those from Iran. On Opening Night the Brunei Gallery was crowded with people as the outgoing Director of SOAS, Prof. Colin Bundy, gave the welcoming speech. He noted that this was the first time SOAS was hosting a major event that focussed on Armenian culture. His speech and another short talk by Dr. Susan Pattie (Director, Armenian Institute) were followed by outstanding short performances by Shakeh Tchilingirian Major (London – modern dance), Varand (Iran – poetry) and Levon Chilingirian (London – violin). Chilingirian played a piece written by contemporary Iranian Armenian composer, Ludwig Bazil (see further article on page 2).

Continued from front cover

An afternoon of lectures and films on Saturday, April 29 included the premiere of *Lullaby*, the evocative documentary film by Guivian and Castro. Prof. Theo van Lint (Oxford) gave a virtuoso tour of the history of Armenians in Iran and Anahit Abad, visiting from Iran, showed her film *Ararat*. As an active filmmaker and also working as an editor at the Tehran Armenian language newspaper *Alik*, Abad gave her perspective on the history of Armenians in the arts in that country. That evening the dance and poetry performance *A Thousand Journeys* by Shakeh Tchilingirian Major and Peter Barker greatly impressed those who attended with its beauty and power. The professional level of the event itself was exceptional, combining traditional and modern dance, poetry recitations, and a musical interlude provided by Rouben Haroutunian (Paris – tar) and Vahan Kerovpyan (Paris – dap).

The weekend continued with a poetry workshop on Sunday afternoon by Varand. This was enthusiastically received. He recited again in the evening, sharing the stage with more music by Haroutunian, accompanied by Kerovpyan, singing traditional folk and troubadour songs as well as Spanish flamenco. A delicious dinner was prepared and served by London Iranian Armenians, Nairi Stepan–Sarkissian and Rita Barseghian, with additional treats from Jakobs Deli. In the afternoon Nairi Sahakian led an arts workshop exploring the older craft traditions of Armenians in Iran. Working with clay or painting on tiles and plates, her students were inspired by the many examples of dynamic patterns and delicate designs Sahakian brought.



Photographer Raffi Avanesian

Photograph by Raffi Avanesian



Screen (2004, inkjet print on plastic foil laid on polycarbon) by Leon Ghalichian



Dancer Shakeh Tchilingirian Major

Co-organiser and curator (Iran artists) Veronica Castro



Poet Varand



Peter Barker reciting poetry



Co-organiser Nayer Qajar, Nairi Sahakian (curator, diaspora artists), Anahit Abad (filmmaker)

Arts Workshops

The Arts Workshops series included sessions for adults and for families to learn Armenian dance with Shakeh Tchilingirian Major. We receive continuing requests for this and were happy for the opportunity once more to learn from such an inspiring teacher. Especially beautiful compositions emerged from the *Bird Letters and Calligraphy* morning led by Astghik Vardanyan. Astghik is a very talented violinist but also continues this tradition taught to her by her grandmother. The final workshop in this series was led by storyteller Vergine Gulbenkian, helping a group of women to work on their own narrative skills. With Vergine's encouragement the participants stimulated and provoked each other into a very entertaining exchange of stories and plans for future work.

Continued on page 3...



Bird letter workshop



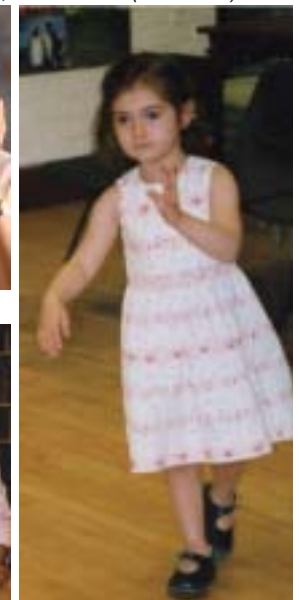
Storyteller Vergine Gulbenkian



Stepan Chilingirian with his bird letters



Sylvia Lucas at bird letter workshop



Narineh Der Hakobian at children's dance workshop

The four workshops in the Oral History series provided wonderful opportunities to build skills and work towards a larger, long-term project of creating an archive of local and ethnic oral histories. The best attended was the first which focussed on the experiences of Iranian Armenians in Stepan-Sarkissian, and Adom interviewed by Dr. Susan Pattie, decisions to migrate to Britain and their evening left everyone with a desire to workshops focussed on particular such as the use of video. Veronica Castro considerable experience with a variety of see video as central to the process of the third workshop, participants brought a “jumping-off point” for a narrative of



Chilingirian String Quartet

Britain. Anahit Kazarians, Gagik Saboonchian agreed to be gently discussing the circumstances of their adjustment once on these shores. The pursue this much further. The following techniques to help with improving skills and Helena S. Inverno used their approaches to encourage participants to interviewing, rather than an “extra”. In a favourite object from home, using it as their own life. Led by Susan Pattie, this

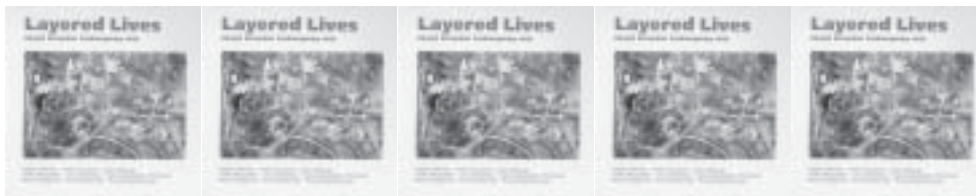
session showed how this technique with can quickly open the way for memories and ideas. Dr. Polly Russell, from the British Library Sound Archive, explored the many ways in which food underpins identity and inspires memory. During this final session she vividly demonstrated the successful use of a focus on food.



Soprano Patricia Rozario *By Susan Pattie*

Further lectures covered a variety of topics with Prof. Edmund Herzig (then Manchester, now Oxford) on the formative Safavid period and Dr. Kathryn Spellman speaking on Armenian evangelicals as part of the Armenian Studies Group series. The thought-provoking lecture on diaspora issues by editor of *Diaspora Journal*, Prof. Khachig Tölölyan (Wesleyan, U.S.) is the subject of another article in this issue.

The final event was a superb performance by the Chilingirian String Quartet with soprano Patricia Rozario. The audience was able to make a final visit to the gallery, opened during the interval of the concert and heard the London premiere of a setting of the poetry of Sayat Nova for quartet and soprano by the Iranian Armenian composer, Ludwig Bazil. This piece was paired with an earlier work in the programme by John Tavener with poetry by Anna Akhmatova, again sung by Rozario. A quartet by Haydn began the evening.



For more information on the artists and their work, order the exhibition booklet of *Layered Lives* at £5. A few beautiful paintings, posters and photographs remain for sale through the Armenian Institute.

Artists exhibiting at *Layered Lives*, Brunei Gallery

- Edman Aivazian, painter (born in Tehran, lives in London)
- Raffi Avanesian, photographer, Founder and Director of Armenian Association for Photographers in Iran (lives in Tehran)
- Karen Babayan, painter (born in Iran, lives in Leeds)
- Sonia Balassanian, multi-media artist, Founder of the Armenian Centre for Contemporary Experimental Art in Yerevan (born in Iran, lives in New York)
- Leon Ghalichian, designer, sculptor, painter (born in Tehran, died in London)
- Sharis Garabedian D'Ambrosi, photographer (born in Teheran, lives in Paris)
- Marcos Grigorian, painter (born in Russia, lived in Iran, now in New York and Yerevan)
- Hermineh Keshish, painter (lives in Tehran)
- Henrik Khachatoorian, graphic designer, theatre director (lives in Tehran)

Focus on Community Newsmakers: Hrathe Koundarjian

Young, articulate and passionate about the politics of social action, Hrathe Koundarjian is one of the few Armenian lobbyists for Genocide Recognition who has taken the mandate of its broader implications seriously. Campaigning now for those suffering in Darfur, Koundarjian feels strongly that the situation there is startlingly similar to that of Armenians ninety years ago. However, he says Armenians generally do not look at what is happening today, though the same moral arguments apply.

Born in London, Koundarjian and brother Arec were raised in an Armenian-speaking home. Parents Rita and Hovhannes were born in Lebanon but Koundarjian emphasises that he never felt there was a competition between the Armenian culture at home and at Tahta Sunday school and the surrounding British culture. “Both sat comfortably”, he says, mentioning that the attitude of his parents was open and welcoming, something which their British neighbours and colleagues appreciated. An open door, food on offer and warm hospitality were probably as appealing as they were different. Though attending weekly Armenian language classes was at times a struggle, like many people, Koundarjian now sees the value of something he was basically forced to do at the time. Friends made at the Tahta School remain very close.

Education was important in the Koundarjian family and Hrathe says he went to school seven days a week (including music school on Saturdays). “In that environment”, he says, “you do foster a desire for learning.” Attending a state secondary school, he felt he learned as much about crime, poverty, and managing chaos as the more traditional subjects and along the way gained a certain amount of self-reliance which has been helpful. He later attended Sussex University where he earned a BA in Politics and Development Studies. Though he had enjoyed A level Politics, he felt the BA degree courses were too heavy on philosophy and desperately in need of more practical content.

Following university, Koundarjian took on work as a researcher at the House of Commons, working for MPs Geraint Davies and Jimmy Wray. A visit to the U.S. sparked an application to work as an intern on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. For four months, Koundarjian learned the basics of lobbying with the ANCA and with Congressman Steve Rothman. He notes that this was his first real involvement with the Armenian community outside of school and it was a fascinating time to be in Washington, a “wonderful window on the world”. Though very impressed with the lobbying expertise and power he witnessed there, the work had another impact as well. “One of the things that surprised me was that Armenians were willing to lobby, willing to push the institutions to work for them, but were not willing to stand as politicians themselves.” Not one to shrug his shoulders in



despair, Koundarjian plans to eventually run for Parliament himself.

The stint in Washington was followed by two years working for the Committee for the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide (CRAG) based in London. Koundarjian thinks of this work as both recognition and, more importantly, prevention. While he feels it is understandable, given the troubled past, that some Armenians are very nationalistic in their discussion of the Genocide, this does not help to achieve their goals. One has to be conscious of generalising about anyone, “about creating Them and Us”, he says. There are Turkish people who have sat in jails because of their statements about the Genocide, and others who take risks all the time. A blanket description

of a “race” is wrong and jars with reality and helps to perpetuate the idea that some people can be excluded from society.

More work in Parliament followed CRAG but over the last eighteen months, Koundarjian has been building up his own not-for-profit business, Principle Affairs, helping charities to achieve their political aims. As Managing Director, he works with a number of charities, including an HIV Trust and HIV charity, Body and Soul, for a short while the hospice movement, and most importantly the Aegis Trust. He helps a charity articulate its needs, such as a change in law, and then advises on how to do it, including assistance in practical aspects such as speaking on television, writing press releases, chairing meetings in Parliament, organising demonstrations.

The terrible conditions in Darfur are currently Koundarjian’s greatest concern. He feels strongly that Darfur would not be happening if the world had faced up to earlier genocides in Armenia, Rwanda, Cambodia, and the Holocaust. A reluctance to intervene is coupled with the judgement that the situation is an intractable civil war. Koundarjian sees clear similarities with Darfur today and the Armenian genocide 90 years ago, even down to marauding militia on horseback (the Jangaweed). The role of the aid agencies, he says, is remarkably identical as they have managed to keep thousands alive – with the help of governments – though people are being herded into the desert to die. He feels that Armenians should do more in Darfur. “It is poignant for me that we talk about what happened 90 years ago but don’t look at what is happening today. I think Armenians would have a better image and be listened to if they engaged with the current tragedy.” Armenians can write to their MPs and participate in campaigns, they can get in touch with organisations already doing work there such as the Aegis Trust, Oxfam, Amnesty, Human Rights Watch; they can donate to aid agencies. Most of all, he urges people to get more information about the problem and get engaged in politics generally.

By Susan Pattie

The Bastard of Istanbul by Elif Shafak

By now everyone has heard that Elif Shafak, best-selling writer in Turkey was acquitted in September of insulting ‘Turkish identity’ under the infamous Article 301. *The Bastard of Istanbul* is the first contemporary Turkish novel which fictionalises a frequent conundrum in Istanbul today, namely ‘the coming out’ of crypto-Armenians. Journalists, professors, musicians, lawyers declare themselves as having hidden Armenian grandparents, while high-ranking officers in the army, the police and government dare not ‘come out’ for fear of being penalised or losing their jobs. Elif Shafak elaborates on this sensitive dilemma and its implications in her new book with a provocative title in Turkish, ‘Baba ve Piç’, and a cover with a cleft pomegranate unambiguously spilling ruby red seeds to prudish readers.

The style of the novel may come as a shock too, particularly to those who have read the sparse post-Genocide literature existing in European languages. Modern Turkish authors have embraced magical realism with enthusiasm, and relished the licence to embroider a complex tale with numerous sub-plots and lavish asides, to swoop into the paranormal and metaphysical, but most often peer at the grotesque underbelly of lumpen-Istanbul.

Shafak’s characters confront one another over the Armenian Genocide, and the institutionalised cover-up enforced in Turkey. Two girls from opposite sides of the Atlantic are drawn together in a surprise visit in Istanbul and freely discuss their heritage. Shafak draws on her experience of living in Arizona, in Istanbul, and on her extensive research in what might be called broadly a new ‘civil rights movement’ in Turkey with recognition of the Armenian Genocide at its epicentre.

One character in the novel lists her Armenian ancestors ending with “ . . . Tchakmakchian, all my family tree has been Something Somethingian, and I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives in the hands of Turkish butchers in 1915, but I myself have been brainwashed to deny the genocide because I was raised by some Turk named Mustapha.”

For this offending sentence she was rewarded with a lawsuit, the last to join a roster of about 60 journalists and publishers charged under the same article for airing their views and opinions in the press. Her charge set a new precedent since it was applied to a work of fiction although the word, ‘soykerim’, genocide, is commonly published in the Turkish press without qualification. Turkish authors Shafak, and winner of the Nobel Literature Prize Orhan Pamuk before her, were both acquitted. Not so lucky Hrant Dink¹, recent recipient of Norway’s prestigious Bjornson Prize, and the most prominent Armenian in Turkey, almost daily cited in the press. He was given yet another six month sentence for discussing his previous conviction with Reuter’s. Prime Minister Erdogan wants Article 301 changed. The Human Rights Agenda Association (IHGD) has called on Istanbul Bar Association to stop lawyer Kerincsiz and his supporters in the wake of new assaults on human rights activists.

However the thirst of Turkish readers for finding out about their murky history made Shafak’s book a best-seller overnight. Satirical, gutsy, overflowing with crazy people in ornamental settings, outlandish twists of plot entangle the underlying story-line of hidden identity. The social saga about two families, one in Istanbul and the other in Arizona, colliding to find out some shocking truths about themselves accelerates to a thundering denouement. The accusing finger points, ‘Dear Reader, Do you know who you really are?’

By *Nouritza Matossian*

(*The Bastard of Istanbul* is published by Viking (USA) in January 2007. It is not published in UK)

¹ This book review was written before the assassination of Hrant Dink on 19 January 2007.

The Assassination of Hrant Dink



The Armenian Institute is deeply saddened by the assassination of Hrant Dink the founder and editor of the Turkish-Armenian weekly *Agos*. He spoke in London at the invitation of AI in 2005. Those who were fortunate to hear him were deeply impressed by his passion, charisma and fresh approach to Turkish-Armenian relations. AI is joining other organisations in commemorating the life and important work of this courageous man.

Open House London at St Sarkis: Starting Point for A Scholar’s Journey

My first encounter with Armenian culture was during a visit to St. Sarkis on Open House Day two years ago. Having only a vague awareness of the existence of the Armenian Genocide, this gave me a renewed interest in a seemingly little-known culture. As an undergraduate studying history, I have had the opportunity to expand my knowledge and understanding of Armenian history, realising my earlier desire to find out more. Taking a thematic paper on migration through history, I decided to write my dissertation on the Armenian diaspora in the 20th century. In this piece, I explored the meaning and changing conceptions of diaspora by comparing experiences in Iran and the USA. My findings demonstrated how identity could be retained across borders and in very different circumstances, focussing especially on how diaspora existence manifested itself politically in both host societies. In studying for my dissertation I have gained awareness and insight into a history which is often overlooked, which I now feel compelled to share with my fellow students. However, recent media coverage of Genocide-recognition has only served to illuminate the relevance and continuing importance of the subjects touched on in my enquiry. The next logical step in my journey is to experience first-hand the places I have been writing about.

By *Gabriel Huntley - Churchill College, University of Cambridge*

The *Cilicia* in London

After three previous visits by Captain Karen Balayan to present his project of the construction and sailing of the medieval sailing ship, the *Cilicia*, the day came for the actual arrival of the ship through Tower Bridge and mooring at St. Katherine Docks. The Armenian Institute hosted the very first talk by Captain Balayan when the *Cilicia* was still in the process of being built and tested on Lake Sevan. It was now amazing to think that such a fantasy had been realised and the *Cilicia* had sailed all the way from Georgia and along ancient Armenian sailing routes to arrive at our doorstep. My initial reaction to Captain Balayan's first presentation in 2004, I have to say, had been one of scepticism and the unlikelihood of such a fanciful project being pulled off – but I was proved wrong!



Captain Karen Balayan and Vanessa Galbraith

My first glimpse of the *Cilicia* was as I walked towards the dock in the afternoon and saw the Armenian flag flying in the sunlight. Beautiful in her simplicity – a solid and chunky structure – she stood out against the modern, gleaming yachts around her. Thirteenth century Armenia meeting 21st century London in the peaceful oasis of St. Katherine's in the heart of the city. Some of the crew, dark and weathered – one looking like he'd just walked out of the set of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, were wandering around the deck as I climbed up the ladder.

The Armenian Institute hosted the first event welcoming the *Cilicia* to London and as preparations for the event got underway, the BBC film crew arrived. As they wanted a clear run of the deck for their live report, the busy AI volunteers had to stay out of the way below decks and bring a halt to their preparations. All was forgiven when the party was able to get started, and the presenter even joined in for a drink before dashing back to the studio. A relaxed and lively evening followed and guests enjoying drinks and nibbles on the deck were shown around, meeting the crew and Captain. The deck was packed full – the people chatting away and enjoying being on Armenian territory for the evening. As darkness fell, the party continued with an impromptu violin performance by Astghik Vardanyan and the pirate–look–alike getting out his guitar. The evening was a real success and was an appropriate way to end the circle of the *Cilicia* project for the AI in terms of her London visit, the AI having been the initial contact point in England for the Ayas team, who planned, built and sailed the ship. A special thanks is due to Vanessa Galbraith who has not only been the link between Captain Balayan and the AI through the years but has also worked hard to establish important contacts in the British nautical community for the *Cilicia* and her crew. Vanessa was one of the main organisers of this event as well.

By Louisa Culleton

Identities and Loyalties in Contemporary Diasporas: A Conversation with Professor Khachig Tölölyan

Khachig Tölölyan is no stranger to the friends of Armenian Institute. In 2001, he gave the keynote lecture that was part of a series of events that launched the Institute. He is the editor of *Diaspora*, a journal of transnational studies and professor of English at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. As a pioneer of diaspora studies, he is a sought–after commentator on issues touching upon diasporic societies and identities. Professor Tölölyan began his informal talk by briefly describing the increasing number of issues that have emerged in diaspora studies over the last 15 years, as witnessed by over 1100 books published since 1987. Elements that characterise diasporas include dispersion, the issue of maintaining identities, creation of new identities, internal differences in a diasporic society (e.g. Iranian Armenians and Lebanese Armenians in an American setting) and loyalty in the form of concern with the well–being of the homeland. Diasporas share common values but at the same time are not free from internal conflicts. An interesting point that emerged during Tölölyan's talk was the notion that quite often diasporas are more nationalistic than the nation–states towards which they claim loyalty. During the conversation with a packed audience that followed these initial remarks other topics were discussed. These included instrumental approaches to diasporas, whereby the governments of the multiple homelands of diasporic societies compete for their loyalty, the question of religious communities as potential diasporas, and the multiple popularisation of the term “diaspora” which have stretched its definition to cover very diverse social groups as well as concepts about identity.

Professor Tölölyan spoke on 6 June 2006 at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

DAVID KHERDIAN

Songs of the Stork and other early and ancient Armenian songs - Nearer the Heart - Letters to My Father

Three recent collections of poetry by David Kherdian give a glimpse of the subjects and concerns he has considered over a lifetime of writing. Incidents in childhood resurface decades later, revealing themselves as building blocks – and sometimes stumbling blocks in a young person's process of “becoming”. The moving poems in *Letters to My Father* reach far out of the Armenian neighbourhood of Racine, Wisconsin and embrace the experiences of the innumerable immigrant families where different generations stood and still stand baffled, bewildered but beloved by each other. In each of the collections, and most obviously in the more eclectic *Nearer the Heart*, the poetry sings of shared humanity, our joys and foibles.

Songs of the Stork enters a territory with a clear connection to a more distant past with the translation of 15 traditional songs, most well–known in Armenian. Kherdian notes his first impression on undertaking the work was of “innocence and naïveté” which he faithfully maintains, even treasures here. This spirit is also caught in the accompanying simple and strong line drawings by his wife, award–winning artist Nonny Hogrogian. When heard as songs, one often does not focus on

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the words but here the poetry reveals a world that once spanned centuries and now is quite alien. Humour and innocence suffuse a poem/song to a beloved little knife – difficult to imagine outside of perhaps some HipHop songs but there, the knife might be called to bigger adventures than slicing basterma. Through the simple beauty of the verse, the reader enters a very different way of thinking. The messages in at least two of the poems are much more familiar, however, and linked directly to Kherdian's own constant themes of an uncertain but emotionally charged dialogue between past, present and future. "The Pilgrim to the Crane" and "The Lamentation of a Bishop", who, having planted a new vineyard that has not given fruit, recites this elegy as the day of his death approaches" both give sharp focus to the unknowable and emotional edge of our best-laid rational plans.

Bridges and flowing rivers form not only a *leitmotif* in Kherdian's poetry but, as he notes in "Again" (Nearer...), "...the one structure I knew to be the most important one of all, that had entered deeply inside me as I came into my life,..." was "...the bridge, under which the river flowed..." This bridge on State Street, Root River and its "brown, turgid waters" cutting through Racine early enter into Kherdian's self and become his lived emotional landscape, one which he explores in contrast to the mysterious and mostly inaccessible remembered landscapes of his parents. Born in Anatolia, survivors of the Genocide, both remained for Kherdian distracted by their attachment to long-lost smells, sights, and sounds, ones which he could only just intuit but never fully grasp. The lively aquatic world he likewise imagines under the river's murky waters cannot be too far from the complex thoughts and hidden lives he seeks to understand behind his parents' (and their age-mates') foreign behaviour, limited words and different orientations. Perhaps poetry itself can serve as a bridge between these shifting worlds and, as Kherdian offers in another poem in the same collection, "Ours", certainly, like a bridge, carries us into new and profound experiences of being. All three books are highly recommended reading.

Songs of the Stork and *Nearer the Heart* are published by Taderon Press (London and Reading) and distributed by Garod Books Ltd (books@garodbooks.com). *Letter to My Father* is published by RiverWood Press.

By Susan Pattie

Rally 'Round London

Maral Ovanessoff and Rebecca Kouyoumdjian organised a brilliant fund-raising event on 7 October 2006 to raise money for the new Children's Corner in the Armenian Institute library. The sponsored 6 mile walk around London was all the more enjoyable with perfect weather on the day. Participants followed a course set by Maral and Rebecca, looking for clues to the questions they had set along the path. Learning about hidden corners of London as well as gathering information in well-trodden spots such as Hyde Park Corner, the explorers also enjoyed a foray into the Wallace Collection to look for an "Armenian Woman". Gagik, Na'ri and Noemi Stepan-Sarkissian, Shaunt and Meghedi Khalatian, Susan Pattie and Stepan Chilingirian all set off at 11:30 am and were joined en route by Armineh and Haiko Ishkanian, Gigi, Talar and Georgie Young. Together over £700 was raised with the prize going to Gagik for most money raised. As our first prize, Jakobs Deli generously offered a dinner for two with wine and Dr. Michele Sigler very kindly gave two beautiful orchids to thank Maral and Rebecca for their hard work and great ideas. We are also grateful to Nouneh Sarkissian who offered a copy of her newly published book, *Sadap*, to all children who participated.

We look forward to having a special book launch for *Sadap* in the near future. Any new cheques from those who had hoped to participate but were unable to come are very welcome.



*From the Wallace Collection:
An Armenian Woman by
Charles-Zacharie Landelle*



George, Haiko, Stepan and Noemi take a rest.

Children's Corner

The money raised by Rally 'Round London will go towards creating a comfortable space within the library where young people and children can find exciting books, magazines, CDs and DVDs that will inspire them to deepen their ties with their Armenian heritage. Art supplies will also be available to express creative urges. Through the Dowsett Collection, the library already contains numerous Armenian folk and fairy tales, as well as others from around the world. We plan for the Children's Corner to become a centre for bilingual storytelling and puppetry, experimenting with new ways to teach languages as well as entertain. An integral part of this will be a portable puppet theatre, one which the children can use for their own stories as well as being used for visiting professional productions.

In addition to the money raised on October 7, we have also received donations of a huge, bright blue pillow for relaxed reading from the Peter Carapiet family and a large, warm rug from Michele Sigler and family. With this money and future funding, we plan to buy new materials, a basic laptop, the puppet theatre, and assist with the creation of a safe structural area around this space. We hope this valuable resource will be used by individual families as well as by Armenian schools and organisations by special arrangement. The Corner will be planned to open up from a relatively small, private space to a wider audience, when the occasion demands. Once opened, we will be asking children who participate regularly to think of a new, more exciting name for the Corner.

UPCOMING EVENTS

LECTURES

The Mountains Move: Russia, the West and Caucasia

Dr. Ronald Suny

Professor Emeritus of Political Science and History, The University of Chicago

Sunday, February 25 at 7:00 pm

Nevart Gulbenkian Hall, Iverna Gardens, London W8

The Changing Landscape of Historic Western Armenia: Reflections on a Journey into the Past.

Dr. Richard G. Hovannisian

AEF Professor of Modern Armenian History, UCLA

Saturday, March 3 at 7:30 pm

Kensington Central Library, Phillimore Walk, London W8.

MUSIC

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL SERIES

Sayat Nova Ensemble

Sunday, February 11 at 6:30 pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube station). See box on p. 7 for details. With the generous support of the Benlian Trust

LIBRARY

Open House Armenian Institute Library

Saturday, February 17, 1:00 to 4:30 pm Armenian Institute Library, Nevart Gulbenkian Hall, Iverna Gardens, London W8. Dr. Gagik Stepan-Sarkissian, librarian, will host a tour of our valuable collection.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

BY EMAIL: info@armenianinstitute.org

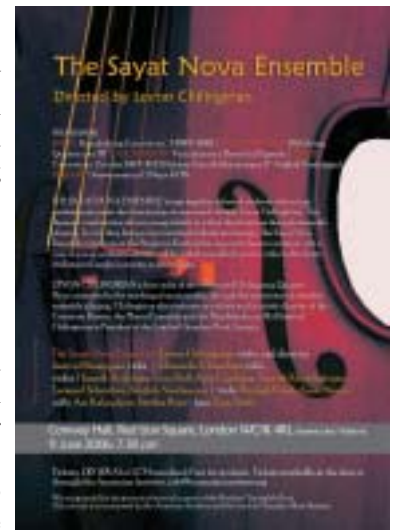
BY POST: Armenian Institute, 7 Hollingbourne Road, London SE24 9NB

Tel: 020 7978 9104 or 020 7371 4434; **FAX:** 020 7274 5764

Sayat Nova Ensemble Concert

On June 11, 2006, the Sayat Nova Ensemble performed their first concert at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. The concert was promoted by the Armenian Institute and the London Chamber Music Society and generously supported by the Benlian Charitable Trust. Directed by Levon Chilingirian, the ensemble is a 17 strong group of young musicians, including both professionals and students. Alexander Chaushian (cello) and Samvel Barsegian (viola), themselves established musicians, act as mentors in their respective sections and demonstrate that musicians can and should combine solo and chamber playing. The aim of the ensemble is to encourage young musicians to widen their horizons through ensemble playing. This combined with the expertise of Chilingirian's direction and experience in chamber music, creates a dynamic and energetic group. The Shostakovich string quartet No. 10 was filled out by the whole ensemble, creating an amazing volume and rich tone. The Aslamazian Variations on a Theme of Paganini were enjoyed by the ensemble and the audience alike for their lively melodies and rhythm. This piece was being heard for the first time in London. Astghik Vardanyan and Tatevik Khachatryan gave a beautiful rendition of the Bach Concerto for two violins, following in the footsteps of their fathers who also have played this piece together. After the final piece, a Mozart divertimento, a Komitas encore ended the full programme to enthusiastic applause. The London Chamber Music Society has already invited the Sayat Nova Ensemble back to play in the 2006-7 season at the Conway Hall.

By *Louisa Culleton*



Armenian Language Classes

Evening classes are taught for East and West Armenian. Students have spoken very highly of both courses. These classes are continuing in the 2007, accommodating both beginners and more advanced pupils. Conversation as well as reading and writing are taught. A new series of one-day intensive classes for absolute beginners is planned for this year.

Don't miss the next opportunity to hear the Sayat Nova Ensemble: February 11 at 6:30 pm at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube). The Ensemble, again including many young Armenian musicians and directed by Levon Chilingirian, will perform pieces by Aslamazian, Tausky, Hovhanness, Mansourian, Mozart (soloist Sarkis Zakarian, piano) and Purcell (soloist Anais Heghoyan, soprano). Tickets (£9) are available from the Conway Hall from 6 pm on the evening of the concert (students under 23 free). This concert is generously supported by the Benlian Trust and co-promoted by the London Chamber Music Society and the Armenian Institute.