Arzruni Brings to Life Works of Komitas at Fresno State Concert

**KATRINA BISSETT**

Staff Writer

Accomplished pianist and scholar Sahan Arzruni brought his love for the music of Komitas to a Fresno State audience on Sunday, October 25, 2015. A special event in the Philip Lorenz Memorial Keyboard Concert Series, the performance, titled “Komitas: A Portrait of the Musician as an Artist,”was a cultural treasure and was cosponsored by the Armenian Studies Program and the Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation.

Arzruni has had a career that has taken him to many countries, gaining international recognition for his talents. As a musician, Arzruni has taken particular inspiration from Komitas, an iconic figure in the tradition of Armenian music. Arzruni referred to Komitas as the “first minimalist” and the “fountainhead” of modern Armenian music. “His music is so deep,” Arzruni said, “that I’ve been playing it for 50 years and each time I discover something new.”

Arzruni’s research on Komitas is fueled by a deep desire to understand and recognize the history of Armenian music. He claims that one must understand Komitas perfectly, as much as

See Arzruni Page 2

Melkonian Discusses Changes in Global Armenian Art Exhibitions

**ARAMAYIS ORKUSYAN**

Editor

“2015 was a year of groundbreaking undertakings of Armenian art and marked a paradigm shift in the way contemporary Armenian art is conceptualized and exhibited globally,” stated

See Melkonian Page 7

Society for Armenian Studies Holds 41st Annual Meeting and International Conference in Denver

**STAFF REPORT**

To mark the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) held an international conference, “The Impact of the Armenian Genocide,” on Saturday, November 21, 2015, in Denver, Colorado.

The SAS is the international association of Armenian Studies scholars and teachers and held its 41st Annual Meeting on the same day in Denver. The Conference and Meeting were held in conjunction with the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, which brings hundreds of scholars in a variety of disciplines together to present papers and to participate in panels.

The SAS organized a conference on “The Impact of the Armenian Genocide” at 10:00AM with opening remarks by SAS President Barlow Der Mugrdechian, who welcomed the participants and also local Denver Armenians.


Elbrecht Bequest of More Than $97,000 to ASP

**KATRINA BISSETT**

Staff Writer

“The Cut” Premieres at Fresno Film Festival

“All the stars were against Armenia to survive,” stated screenwriter Mardik Martin. But Armenians did survive, and they are now telling their story. Armenian-themed films are beginning to gain popularity, and Fresno has now hosted the screening of two such films this year.

A special screening of The Car, an independent film centered on the life of a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, was featured

See “The Cut” Page 6

“2015 was a year of groundbreaking undertakings of Armenian

See Arzruni Page 2

“The Cut” screenwriter Mardik Martin, right, with Dr. Mary Husain. Martin was in Fresno for the screening of “The Cut.”

See Elbrecht Page 7
Armenian Studies Program
Book/Video/CD Archival Gifts
Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Prof. Sergio La Porta, and the Armenian Studies Program would like to thank the donors, authors, and publishers for the following books, periodicals, videos, and archival gifts, either offered personally, or to the Program:

Dr. Carlos Antaramian, El Colegio de Michoacan, A. C., Mexico, for a copy of Revista de Historia Internacional, Armenia Una Historia (coordinated by Carlos Antaramian) (ISTOR, 2015), No. 62, 223pp., in Spanish. The Journal contains a collection of articles related to the Armenian Genocide and Armenian History. Also included in the donation was a DVD, Los Armenios en la Merced, a collection of interviews with Armenian Genocide survivors (2012), running time 52 minutes.

Maral Boyajdian, Granada Hills, for the gift of her new book At The Poppies Bloomed (Salor Press, 2015), 278pp., in English. This is a fictional story based on real events from the Armenian Genocide. It is a story of love, loss, and hope—of two young Armenians who face seemingly insurmountable odds while the land of the flesh breaks apart and World War I rushes toward them along with the greatest massacre the world had ever known.


Mousa Ler Association, Fresno, CA, for the gift of the Mousa Ler 36th Anniversary Remembrance Album, 2015, 66pp., in Armenian and English. The Fresno Mousa Ler Association was founded in 1985, and annually commemorates “The Forty Days of Mousa Ler” in September.

Vonnie Franka, Fresno, for donating several Armenian books and records.

Vartkes Teveldeyan, Moscow, Russia, for his book Жизнь пашапанеся сна (Life Begins Again) (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Slovo, 2015), 470pp., in Russian.


There are many ways to support the Armenian Studies Program. There are many ways to support the Armenian Studies Program.

Give Your Way
to the Armenian Studies Program
1) A gift today could come through the donation of cash, stock, or goods.
2) The Armenian Studies Program can also be supported in the future in estate plans.

Regardless of how a donation is made, each gift impacts the lives of students and faculty at Fresno State.

For more information call the Armenian Studies Program at 278-2669.
Responses to Ottoman Revolution of 1908 Explored by Der Matossian

The Young Turk Revolution was a critical point in the history of not only the Ottoman Empire, but also the history of the Armenians. This pivotal year was the topic of a lecture by Dr. Bedross Der Matossian titled “The Political Culture of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908: Space, Symbolism, and Language” presented on Friday, October 30.

The lecture was part of the Armenian Studies Program Fall 2015 Lecture Series, with the support of the Virginia-based Ararat Foundation, founded in 1987, which preserves Armenian culture and Christian faith, through lectures on Armenian subjects, seminars, literature distribution, and research.

“I was always interested in the history of the Ottoman Empire, specifically that of the Armenians, and eventually I developed an interest in ethnic relationships there between Armenians, Arabs, and Jews,” stated Der Matossian, who was born in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. Der Matossian’s interests led him to pursue his undergraduate and master’s degrees in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University, and subsequently a Ph.D. in Middle East History in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University in 2008. Currently, he is an assistant professor of history at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

The Young Turk Revolution marked the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution of 1876 and the beginning of the abolition of the Ottoman authoritarian regime. Highlighting the significance of this period, Der Matossian stated “I see [the revolution] as a major turning point in not only the history of the Ottoman Empire, but also in modern Middle Eastern history. It was the last hope the Ottoman empire had to revive itself from the post-Ottoman Hardships.

All ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire expressed euphoria after the revolution. Der Matossian’s lecture concentrated on demonstrating how the post-revolutionary feeling manifested itself in these different ethnic groups through celebration and festivities. Among the ethnic groups that participated in these activities, and the focus of Der Matossian’s talk, were the Armenians.

In response to the news of the new constitutional regime, Armenians in the provinces decorated their streets and houses, and masses gathered in Armenian churches and cemeteries in celebration of what was believed to be a change for the better. “For the Armenians, the Young Turk Revolution was very important,” stated Der Matossian. “Their hopes were very high, which mingled with the hopes of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. They thought that this would be a new page in the history of the Ottoman Empire, and that they were going to live in peace and security.”

This, however, turned out not to be the case. As Der Matossian argued in his lecture “the revolutionary festivities were contradictory to the idea of the revolution itself.” The revolution aimed to create an “Ottoman citizen” and centralized government, yet the festivities celebrated the hopes for administrative decentralization and freedom to maintain privileges and ethnic diversity.

Der Matossian’s lecture was based on a chapter of his book, Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire, in which he meticulously studied the Young Turk Revolution by reflecting the public opinion and reaction of the “non-dominant” ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire. Published by the prestigious Stanford University Press in 2014, Dr. Der Matossian’s book has received positive reviews from major scholars in the field.

Although other scholars study the Young Turk Revolution, “they have tended to view the Revolution from the center—meaning through the prism of the Young Turks,” commented Der Matossian. “Extensive research has been done from the dominant perspective, very little has been done from the perspective of the non-dominant groups; and even when this research has been done, it tended to concentrate on one ethnic group.”

Der Matossian brings novelty to the field by bringing to life the multiple voices of different ethnic groups (Armenian, Arabs, Jews, and Turks) and analyzing the revolution from the perspective of each society.

Dr. Der Matossian is now studying the Adana Massacres of 1909, which will be the topic of his next book.

SAS Special Conference “Impact of the Genocide” Marks the 100th Anniversary of the Genocide

Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) President Barlow Der Mugrdechian chaired the 41st Annual Meeting of the Society on Saturday, November 21, in Denver, Colorado.

The Annual Meeting is an opportunity for members to discuss the major challenges of the Society and to hear a variety of reports. Der Mugrdechian reported on the activities of the Society during 2015, and presented plans for the upcoming year.

The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) was holding its annual conference the same weekend, and the SAS sponsored a panel as part of the MESA conference at 2:00PM on Sunday, November 22, entitled “Towards an Understanding of Identity: Ottoman Armenian Art, Literature, and Music,” organized and chaired by Der Mugrdechian, with the participation of Jirair Christianian (Independent scholar, Denver), “Orphaned Armenian Objects in Istanbul: The Patriarchate Museum Collection”, Nora Cherishian Lessersohn (Harvard), “Armenian Self and Ottoman Society: Christoph Orient’s Oriental and Turkish Museum in London (1853-54)”, and Ron Marchese (University of Minnesota, Duluth), “Cultural Identity: Ottoman Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period: Data from the Armenian Churches of Constantinople during the Second Armenian Renaissance-post 1700.”

In his presentation Christianian discussed some of the significant art objects held in the Patriarchate Museum located at the Ottoman Patriarchate of Constantinople. Armenians from diverse areas in the former Ottoman Empire produced these works of art, which represent the heritage of the entire Armenian people. In her paper, Lessersohn explored the question of identity, and how the boundaries of identity were fluid in the 19th century Ottoman Empire. She described the life and work of Christoph Orient, a multi-talented and adventurous Armenian, who traveled and mingled freely in European courts as well as in the Ottoman Empire. His “Turkish Museum” established in London was a means of understanding Oscanyan’s self-perception as an Armenian and as an Ottoman citizen.

Marchese presented an analysis of Armenian religious art, through the prism of those who created that art, especially that produced in Constantinople. His lecture explored how Armenian patrons played a key role in the production of Armenian art, especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. He also discussed the sociological implications of the art, and how it represented the pious work of generations of artisans.

Many other SAS scholars participated in individual panels during the MESA conference and Armenian Studies was well represented at the conference.

SAS President Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Vice-President, Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska-Lincoln); Professor, Barlow Der Mugrdechian; (California State University, Long Beach), “Post-1915 Dispersion Literature and the Figure of the Failed Witness”; Barlow Der Mugrdechian (California State University, Fresno), “The Theme of Genocide in Armenian-American Literature”; and Pamela Abrahamian (Los Angeles Pierce College), “The Diasporic Witness: Reconstruction of Testimony by Contemporary Los Angeles Artists”.

The SAS is administered by an Executive Council: President, Barlow Der Mugrdechian; Vice-President, Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska-Lincoln); Secretary, Lilit Keshishyan (UCLA); Treasurer, Sergio La Porta (California State University, Fresno); and advisors Tamar Boyadjian (California State University); and Marc Mamigonian (NAASR).

The SAS is headquartered at the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno and its website is at societyforarmenianstudies.com. The SAS can be reached by email at barlowd@csufresno.edu.
One important narrative of the Armenian Genocide that has been neglected is the story of the righteous Turks who risked their lives to save Armenians. It reminds us that animosity towards Armenians was not universal among Turks in the Ottoman Empire and that there were those who would defy the law to protect Armenians. This narrative is not only important for the Armenians to remember, but for the Turks as well. It is the story of these righteous Turks, who the Turks of today must hold as the standard bearers of humanity in a dark time in their history.

Kurt, a doctoral candidate at Clark University and Kazan Visiting Scholar at Fresno State, has been documenting the stories of righteous Turks with his supervisor, Dr. Taner Akçam. On Friday, November 6, Kurt presented his findings in a lecture, “Righteous Turks: Two Turkish Officials Who Saved the Lives of Armenians.” This lecture was part of the Armenian Studies Program’s Fall Lecture Series with the support of the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

Kurt opened his lecture by stating that there were many Turkish and Kurd who saved Armenians. “Despite the order of the Committee of Union and Progress party, which stipulated that anyone who protects and hides Armenians will be executed, these Muslims continued to hide and protect Armenians by challenging this official order.” For his presentation, Kurt chose to focus on two state officials, Cemil Kunneh and Ahmed Necmettin Bey, who used their positions to protect Armenians.

Cemil Kunneh, who Kurt referred to as a “Küçük Schindler,” was a lieutenant in the Ottoman Marine army and was assigned to direct the Birecik shipyard, where boats were made to ferry Ottoman soldiers across the Euphrates River. During the Genocide, Kunneh recruited Aintab’s Protestant Armenians to work in the shipyard.

“In doing so, Kunneh managed to save Aintab Armenians from perishing in Der Zor. Kunneh constructed tents for the Armenian workers and their families as well as providing them with clothes, food, and medicine,” stated Kurt. “He also showed the kindness that he had to extend to the Armenians that Kunneh saved from deportation.”

Necmettin Bey was a well-educated Armenian who became a photographer and opened his own studio. While Mouradian was on the deportation route to Der Zor, he was hired by Kunneh in Birecik, thus sparing his life. “He tried to save many from Aintab and brought them to Salamia. He did not follow the extermination policy of the CUP party against Armenians from deportation by hiring them in his construction projects,” said Kurt.

It is important for the story of the conscientious Turks such as Cemil Kunneh and Ahmed Necmettin Bey to be studied and remembered. They are examples of individuals who were able to hold onto their humanity in a time of genocide and brutality.

Amber Galvan, who is new to the culture and eager to learn, stated, “It’s interesting. Most people take Spanish or French, but I wanted to take something different. It’s an interesting class. I hope to understand and communicate in Armenian.”

Students wishing to learn their second or third language. Among them is senior Victoria Tinoco, whose family, said sophomore Marina Galvan. “We’re moving very fast and I’m really impressed with their progress. They write letters since they’re so different, and I like passing by the monument and actually understanding the Armenian words on it and realizing that I am one of the few students that knows what they mean,” said Galvan.

A number of students found that of the required courses in Area C2, Armenian 1A was the most interesting. “Most people take Spanish or French, but I wanted to take something different. It’s an interesting class. I hope to understand and communicate in Armenian,” said junior Glenda Davis.

Others wanted to learn their second or third language. Among them is senior Victoria Tinoco, whose family, said sophomore Marina Charshukian. “Senior Bagrad Oganyan is taking the course to strengthen [his] reading and writing skills and to be able to read [his] Bible in Armenian.”

For Prof. Der Mugrdechian, the opportunity to teach Armenian to a diverse classroom is a challenge that he has enjoyed for many years, and he enjoys imparting the Armenian culture to those who would like to learn the Armenian language.

Dr. La Porta Actively Publishing

At the end of 2014, Dr. Sergio La Porta published a collection of essays on *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition*, co-edited with Prof. Kevork Bardakjian of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, who also published the *Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha* series of Brill publishers, contains some 30 articles by a diverse body of scholars from the United States, Armenia, Canada, Israel, and Europe. The articles cover apocalyptic visions and texts from Armenia’s pre-Christian past to the fifteenth century in a comparative context.

The volume breaks new and significant ground in the understanding of eschatological expectations and apocalyptic fears in Armenian literature.

The volume contains two contributions by Dr. La Porta himself: one on the vision of St. Gregory the Illuminator, the second, on a counsel of the monastic teacher Vardan Aygekc’i completed in 1212 that addresses the Emperor Anthotse and the Antichrist and the end of the world.

Among Dr. La Porta’s publications this past year was an article on intellectual exchange and competition between Armenian apostolic monastic institutions and Latin missionaries in the fourteenth centuries. It examined the missionary efforts of Franciscan and Dominicans friars and suggested that Latin teachings appealed to Armenians because of their Aristotelian focus. Engagement with these teachings and the conversion of Armenian monks to Latin Christianity, led to both a harsh reaction on the part of Armenian apostolic monastic institutions, as well as a reform of monastic education. On the one hand, an independent inquisition of Armenian monasteries was spearheaded by the monastic leaders of the region of Siwnik’ in which those who had accepted Latin Christian doctrines were brutally treated and even executed. On the other hand, Latin teaching methods of organization, and structure of curricula were adapted to the Armenian intellectual tradition. The result was a revitalization of biblical and theological speculation in these monastic schools. The article was published in *Volume 21* of the journal, *Medieval Encounters.*
Marchese Reflects on Meaning of Armenian Art from the Armenian Churches of Istanbul

Dr. Ron Marchese presented his research on art from the Armenian Churches of Istanbul in his lecture “Treasures of Faith: Reflections on Armenian Society and Culture.” This presentation was part of the Fall Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and was supported by the Leo S. Peters Foundation.

Dr. Marchese has recently published a new book “Treasures of Faith: Sacred Relics and Artifacts from the Armenian Orthodox Churches of Istanbul,” coauthored by Dr. Arman Brez. It is the second volume in a series based on a study of the art held by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and located in Istanbul.

The restaurant’s name is a reference to Noah’s Ark whose society that created it. Art, as a symbol of a faith, inspired the artists to pay particular attention to the smallest of details. “You do not offer mediocre work to God, even if it cannot be seen,” said Dr. Marchese, who demonstrated this by showing detailed icons that were smaller than one’s index finger. It did not matter to the artist that these details would not be seen from the pews as long as he was “honest to the Biblical tradition.”

Dr. Marchese described art in this period as not only a means of giving glory to God, but as a means to educate churchgoers.

“The art has a primary function to depict the historiography of Christianity, which is often difficult to portray. How do you illustrate the grace of God coming down upon the Mother of God? The artist has to find a way to do this, or they are not being honest to the Biblical tradition,” stated Dr. Marchese.

To achieve this level of expertise, Armenian artists from Istanbul would often travel to Europe, particularly France, for their education. They would bring knowledge and innovation back, which differentiated the more modern art of Constantinople from more conservative art. The Armenians of Istanbul were no longer following the Byzantine tradition and were able to forge their own unique “Constantinople Style.”

Because artifacts were commissioned for religious functions, they never included the personal inscriptions of the artist or donor. “This was a sign of humility,” said Dr. Marchese. “Artists understood that it was not important to include their names.”

By discussing these artifacts from Armenian churches, Dr. Marchese gave the audience a glimpse into the devout lives of those who created them, as well as a broader understanding of the society in which they lived.

The Ekezyan family does an outstanding job of offering Armenian and Mediterranean cuisine, as well as offering amazing customer service. Distinguishing themselves from other restaurants, Ekezyan stated, “Our passion for the food is what guarantees our success because we’re not a chain or fast food restaurant. We won’t serve what we ourselves won’t eat.”

“Our restaurant has a fresh take on food and we make absolutely everything from scratch,” explained Ekezyan. However, the restaurant still offers the traditional kebob plates with chicken, beef, and an all time favorite Lula Kebob, as well as other classic dishes such as Falafel, Shwarma, Gyros, Tabouleh, Fatamoud, and of course, Baklava.

The recently opened “Ark Mediterranean Grill.”

The family provides a personal and delicate touch to each and every order and works hard to ensure that their customers become regulars.

In addition to all of the wonderful features the restaurant offers, they also offer to-go orders for customers who have a busy lifestyle, but would still like a tasty home cooked meal. In addition, “Ark” provides catering service.

Working at the cemetery has exposed Lauren and Marina to Fresno’s rich history and Armenian roots, which they did not know about prior to their involvement at the cemetery. “At the cemetery you see the graves of all the important people that lived in Fresno,” stated Lauren Chandukian. “We are the next generation and we have a responsibility, by living in this area, to maintain the history and traditions and to be involved in the community.”

The Chandukian sisters have a bright future ahead of them. Both are very committed to serving the community and hope to continue having a positive impact.

Marina Chandukian placing American flags on the graves of Veterans at Ararat Armenian Cemetery in Fresno.

The Armenian Students Organization has exemplary members who make an impact in the local community. Among them are sisters Lauren and Marina Chandukian. Lauren, a senior majoring in Biology and minor in Armenian Studies, will be graduating this Spring, while Marina, a sophomore, is majoring in Communicative Disorders and Speech Pathology.

In between classes and ASO events, Lauren and Marina spend their time working at the Ararat Armenian Cemetery located in southwest Fresno.

Their involvement at the cemetery began as a project Marina created in order to earn the “Gold Award,” the highest honor awarded in Girl Scouts. The project, titled “Honoring Our Veterans in the Ararat Cemetery,” was, according to Chandukian, to “identify the graves of our Veterans, so they can be honored and easily recognized at this cemetery.” Marina sent out 1,500 letters to families connected with the cemetery asking for donations and information on Veterans. As a result of Marina’s work, letters containing information and photographs flooded the cemetery, which resulted in the placement of the permanent metal flag emblems.

While the initial project that brought the sisters to the cemetery has now ended, Lauren and Marina were hired as part- time staff and continue to work on projects serving the community. They are currently working on building a database that will track the names and specific burial sites of all the deceased at the cemetery. The sisters hope their work will make it easier for families to locate their loved ones and to simultaneously keep an accurate record of all those who are buried.

Back row, left to right: Michael Retting, Anoush Hakopyan, Ani Ekezyan, Bekir Minian Tanalian, and Tadeh Isakahanian.

Front: Dr. Ron Marchese and Lucie Ekezyan.

The Armenian Churches of Istanbul have passed down a rich artistic heritage. This art gives one a glimpse into the society that created it.

As soon as you step inside “Ark Mediterranean Grill,” a sleek, modern touch is what guarantees our success because we’re not a chain or fast food restaurant. We won’t serve what we ourselves won’t eat.”

Restaurant Review: “Ark Mediterranean Grill”

Staff Writer

Elena Sarmazian

The Ekezyan family does an outstanding job of offering Armenian and Mediterranean cuisine, as well as offering amazing customer service. Distinguishing themselves from other restaurants, Ekezyan stated, “Our passion for the food is what guarantees our success because we’re not a chain or fast food restaurant. We won’t serve what we ourselves won’t eat.”

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Hye Oozh - Saturdays 9:00 AM - Noon

90.7 FM-KFSR

Hye Oozh is 90.7 KFSR’s weekly program dedicated to contemporary and traditional Armenian music and culture.

Current Hye Oozh DJs: Tatevik Ekezyan • Vartush Mesropyan • Marine Vardanyan

ASO Spotlight-Chandukian Project Focuses on Honoring Veterans

Marina Chandukian placing American flags on the graves of Veterans at Ararat Armenian Cemetery in Fresno.

Tadeh Isakahanian

Staff Writer

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What is your favorite Armenian tradition and why?

Sevag Sanikian
Freshman, Biology

My favorite tradition is related to the Armenian holiday of Vartavar (held in July). I like the fun that people have during this holiday, when they throw water on each other. This tradition is my favorite especially because it gets so hot in Fresno during the summer.

Stephen Vardapetian
Junior, Biology

My favorite tradition is the Armenian-style Easter egg fight, a competition in which one person holds their egg still, while another person uses their own egg to strike the opponent’s egg and try to crack it without cracking their own egg. If your egg is cracked on both ends, you lose. The winner is deemed as that year’s “lucky person.” This has been a tradition every Easter since I was young and something I look forward to now. It is a fun and competitive tradition between my cousins and I.

Eduard Sultan
Senior, Biology

One of my favorite traditions is eating Khush, a traditional dish that Armenians usually eat in winter. It is especially consumed on the morning of New Years to celebrate the coming year with good health, good fortune, and happiness.

Verginia Oganesyan
Senior, Liberal Studies

My favorite tradition is going to the Armenian Festival because it was a way to bring the story of the Armenians to a larger audience. It was an opportunity for people to watch a film about the Genocide that also tells an emotional story that people can connect with,” stated Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

Jefferson Beavers, President of Fresno Filmworks, believes that the film is important not only to the Armenian community, but to the community as a whole, to acknowledge the tragic events that took place. It is part of the Fresno Filmworks’ mission “to expose people to the stories that they’re not going to see anywhere else.”

Directed and written by Faith Akin, with screenwriter Mardik Martin (known for his work in Raging Bull and New York, New York), the film provided a vivid retelling of the events of the Genocide, highlighting the horrors the Armenians were forced to face and the continuing struggle to regain lost hope in the face of overwhelming violence.

The film stars Tahar Rahim as the mute Nazaret Manoogian, a father searching for his twin daughters after learning that they survived the Genocide. Akin and Martin withheld no punches on the subject of Armenian suffering, refusing to sugarcoat this black segment of history. In an audience Q & A after the showing, Martin stated, “We tried to tell the truth, and that’s all it is.”

In The Cut, Manoogian is taken from his hometown of Mardin in 1915. This is just the beginning of what would come to be the Armenian Genocide. Manoogian survives a mass killing in the desert and eventually learns that his children survived as well. He embarks on an arduous trans-continental journey to find his daughters, defying all obstacles. Rahim gave a moving performance as Manoogian, managing to emote clearly and soulfully without the medium of speech. He used his entire body to illustrate Manoogian’s inner turmoil, from utter despair to the scrapping rage of a man abandoned by God in the face of suffering. His portrayal of a man overcoming such a difficult handicap is genuinely touching, and it was evident that the audience felt so.

The settings for the film varied drastically, from the Eastern Middle Eastern desert to the North American prairies. The desolation and loneliness of the land mirrored the events of the film, lending it authenticity.

Composer Alexander Hacke’s original film score was truly outstanding. Following a theme of simplicity, the soundtrack forced the viewer to focus solely on the emptiness of Manoogian’s experiences. The main themes that were used throughout the film use modern instrumentation but pay homage to traditional Armenian music, with haunting melody lines and underlying drones. The modern edge of the soundtrack drew the audience in.

Overall, the film was a cinematic success. It had talented actors, stunning scenery, haunting music, and a beautiful story. It is fair to say that Akin’s vision for an accurate retelling of history was realized. It is hoped that this film, and others like it, will lead to wider acknowledgment of the Genocide.
“Streetlights of Memory – A Stand by Memorial,” by sculptor Melik Ohanian, 2010–15, installation view outside the Armenian pavilion located at the Meiktarist Monastery on the island of San Lazzaro. The Armenian National Pavilion won the “Golden Lion Award” for being the best National Pavilion.


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Melkonian, From Page 1

Neery Melkonian, a New York-based independent researcher, writer, curator, and lecturer on modern and contemporary art. She discussed these shifts in her lecture, titled “What Comes AfterUndoing Denial: Reflections on Contempor ary Art and Exhibition Practices in the Armenian Diaspora” on Friday, November 18.

Melkonian’s lecture was the concluding lecture in the Armenian Studies Program Fall 2015 Lecture Series, and was supported by the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

The first of the exhibits discussed by Melkonian was Life-100, displayed in the Brand Library of Los Angeles. Highlighting the importance of this exhibit, Melkonian stated, “For the first time, we were able to see, under the same roof, the works of masters like Gorky, Parajonov, Garabedian, Saroyan, Sayat-Nova, Sefikyan, etc. exhibited with younger living artists that are based in Los Angeles.”

The combination of modern and master artists allowed Life-100 to achieve its mission “to display the inspiring resilience, strength, creativity, and celebrate the contribution of artists of Armenian descent in re-establishing cultural identity and building creative spirit for the future.”

Re-establishing cultural identity through art was also a key feature of Armeniyas (2aug20ylna), the Armenian National Pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale curated by Swiss-Armenian Adeline Ciberyan von Furbesten. Armeniyas was exhibited on the Mikhailist Monastery island of San Lazzaro and won the 2015 Golden Lion Award for best pavilion. Making use of every square inch of the monastic complex, Armeniyas was intended as a space to created dialogue about the Armenian Genocide. The pavilion was groundbreaking, however, because it achieved this atmosphere without the use of works that depicted crisis or massacre.

“One of the things that changed is that no longer was art displayed where you feel hopelessness or powerlessness, anger or victimhood,” explained Melkonian. Instead, Armeniyas concentrated on rediscovering Armenians’ culture and recharacterizing Armenian culture through works by Armenian artists of the diaspora.

The past year has also been groundbreaking for Armenia in the international art community in another respect. In the fall of 2015, the Turkish National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale was represented by Sarkis Zebunyan, known as Sarkis, a Turkish-Armenian artist. Even more notably, 2015 saw the first time that Turkish artists addressed the Armenian Genocide at the 14th Turkish Biennial. Art has been able to transcend the “Taboos” of the Genocide in Turkey, and has become a medium creating dialogue about the events of 1915, where it previously was not allowed.

The last curatorial project discussed by Melkonian was Blind Dates, an ongoing project that is co-curated by Melkonian herself. Inspired by their “blind date,” Melkonian and Turkish curator Defne Ayas believed that “mediating similar encounters might encourage others to start undoing the complex knots that exist between estranged neighbors and distant cultures.”

The project is a platform that brings together both artists and non-artists of Armenian and Turkish descent to work on a research based collaboration that aims to understand the support of the Ottoman Empire.

Behind all the changes that have taken place, however, there is an even more important mechanism at work. “None of this would have been possible if we didn’t see a shift in a article, paradigm,” stated Melkonian.

“Armenians started spending money on contemporary and modern art. They are recognizing the soft power of art—that art may help change minds and help convince powers that may be.”

These changes were also evident in Fresno this year with the construction of the Armenian Genocide Monument on the Fresno State campus.

The goal of the Monument is to commemorate, educate, and inspire.

More than 20,000 students, faculty, and staff pass by the Monument daily.

The Monument transforms the catastrophe of the Armenian Genocide into an esthetic space where healing can take place.

The spirit of the Monument mirrors the changes taking place in the art world.

Vol. 23 of the Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies Published

The Society for Armenian Studies announces the publication of Volume 23 of the Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies (JSAS), an international peer-reviewed Journal, edited by Dr. Sergio La Porta of California State University, Fresno. JSAS Volume 23 includes four articles on Classical and Modern Armenian Studies; five book reviews; a review essay; and three book reviews.

Volume 23 opens with an article by Zarouhi Pogossian on a colophon by the thirteenth-century monastic scholar, Vardan Arwêlêc’i, which provides testimony for an early Armenian impression of the Mongols and their rule. Bjørn Bandlien analyzes a much-ignored migration to Germany sent from the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia in 1314. An account of the embassy is preserved in three Icelandic annals. The section on Modern Armenian Studies begins with a contribution by Houri Berberian that describes the status of Jewish women in mid-eighteenth-century Safavid Iran by examining the Astrakhan Lawcode compiled in the 1760s and some two-dozen letters, petions, and wills housed in archives in Europe and Iran.

The final article is a study by Howard Emirhanian, Hoganwar of the composition and treatment of figures in fifteen Near East Relief posters. Contextualizing the posters within the efforts of the Near East Relief to provide aid to the “stark Armenians,” she looks at how the artists created images that compelled the viewer to action and resonated with a contemporary American audience.

The communications contained in this volume bring to light new information on a broad array of topics. Robert Hewsen re-examines the Romanos-Persian Treaty of Nisibis of 299; while Michael Stone, Doron Ben Ami, and Yana Tchekhaneva’s a reveal a new Armenian inscription from the City of David in Jerusalem. Jasmine Dum Tragut discusses her latest research on Armenian manuscripts containing information on horse medicine; and Michael Stone presents the text and an English translation of a poem by Vohvanim’s Ezran’aci’i Pluz. In his communication, Umit Kurt reflects upon the politics of Turkish-Armenian relations.

Finally, this volume includes a review essay by Christina Maraneci on a recently published book in Chinese and by Vardan Arwêlêc’i on the Journal on how medieval Armenian art history was presented in German studies from the late 19th and early twentieth centuries.

The past year has been a busy one for the Society for Armenian Studies. SAS celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2014 and held an international “Workshop in Armenian Studies” in Yerevan on October 3, 2014, in cooperation with the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The Society also convened a conference in Washington, D.C., called “Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th-20th Centuries,” November 21–22, 2014.

Copies of JSAS may be ordered by contacting the SAS Secretariat at 559-278-2669 or by email at barlowd@csufresno.edu. Individual copies of the Journal are $20 plus shipping. Back issues of JSAS are also available for ordering.

The Secretariat of the Society for Armenian Studies is located at the Armenian Studies Program, California State University, Fresno. The SAS website can be found at societyforarmenianstudies.com.

JSAS Volume 23

ED BRICKLEY, FROM PAGE 1

in the historic homeland of the Armenian people.

157 photographs from their collection are part of the “Churches of Historic Armenia: A Legacy to the World,” page on the website of the Armenian Studies Program (fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies), where they are available to scholars and to the general public.

In an earlier interview, when asked why they had devoted so much of their lives to this project, the Elbrechts explained: “The photographs give meaning to historical accounts, and promote a deeper understanding of the Armenian people—a story of an extraordinary people and their relationships with the people around them.”

The Armenian Studies Program expresses its appreciation for the lasting legacy of the Elbrechts and their support of various activities of the Program.

Hye Sharzhoom

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Update your address by contacting us at 559-278-2669.

December 2015

Hye Sharzhoom
The Armenian Studies Program presents
“Iran’s Mission of Apology to Iran”
by Dr. George Bournoutian
Iona College, New York.

Following the murder of Griboedov, the Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary of Russia and the massacre of the entire Russian Legation, save one, by an angry mob, on February 11, 1829, in Tehran, the government of Iran dispatched a mission with an official apology from the Shah to Tsar Nicholas I. Dr. Bournoutian will discuss the ten-month activities of the mission, and its travels from Tizab to Yerevan, Tiflis, Moscow, and St. Petersburg. Dr. Bournoutian will discuss the importance of these archival materials and also discuss how this period in history ultimately leads to the formation of the first Armenian Republic in 1918.

Thursday, January 28, 2016
7:30PM
University Business Center, Room 191, A. Peters Auditorium, Fresno State
Free admission. Free parking with parking code.

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Read all of the back issues of the newspaper, starting from 1979 to the present.

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in honor of our loving and devoted mother, Mrs. Alice Vartanian, our beloved and devoted father, Mr. Arthur Vartanian of Fresno, and in memory of our cherished grandparents, the late Mr. & Mrs. Simon & Regina Vartanian of Fresno and Mr. & Mrs. Levon & Papay Sarkissian, Los Angeles

Bohjalian catches a key social moment with a book that’s fresh and different... a tale of scandal, shame, and escalating suspense.”
--Library Journal

Chris Bohjalian’s *The Guest Room* is a spellbinding tale of a party gone horribly wrong: two men lie dead in a suburban living room, two women are on the run from police, and a marriage is ripping apart at the seams. Bohjalian brilliantly – and chillingly – shows how life can change in an instant.

“The Guest Room” pulses quick as a page-turner, but its concerns run deep into the moral consequences following an eruption of violence in ordinary lives.”
--Charles Frazier, National Book Award winning author of Cold Mountain

Friday, January 8, 2016
7:00PM
Leon S. Peters and Peter P. Peters Educational Center Auditorium (Save Mart Center West side) Fresno State
Free admission. Free parking.

The Armenian Studies Program and Hamazkayin Educational and Cultural Society present
Best-selling author
Chris Bohjalian
speaking on his new book
*The Guest Room*

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