

From the Artistic Director

Dear Concert Patrons,

Welcome to *A Transcendent Homage: A Choral Tribute to the House of Torgom*. According to historians, in the past Armenia has been connected with the biblical Ashkenaz and, thus, the Armenians are termed “the Ashkenazi nation” in their literature. Armenia has further been identified with the biblical Togamah. In Armenian tradition this genealogy has competed with the theory of Ashkenazi origins, and Armenians have assumed the title of “House of Torgom” as well. The traditional ancestor of the Armenians, Haik, was a son of Gomer, one of the six sons of Japheth. Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togamah were the sons of Gomer.*

This evening, you will hear a colorful selection of Armenian sacred and secular choral music. We will open the concert with *Prayer of Thaddeus the Apostle (Aravot Loosaber)*, which not only describes St. Thaddeus as a great light that was shone to the “Nation of Torgom” but also it is Komitas’ first attempt to arrange a simple hymn into a majestic choral work. *Ter Ketso Doo ezHays*, is a prayer for well-being of Armenians. However, we would like to dedicate this music to all the human beings who are in pain today due to natural disasters, ongoing and emerging wars, poverty, poor health, injustice, etc.

Komitas’ *Wedding Songs* suite is a wonderful collection of short pieces which not only are precious musically but also they summarize the rites of an Armenian traditional wedding which, in my opinion, has significant cultural importance. The suite starts with a blessing at the groom’s house where his family and friends prepare his attire, they invite his parents to bless him, they pray for him, and they deck him out on his steed while praising his youthful looks. Next scene is on the streets where all the people are approaching to join the crowd as the groom is headed for the bride’s house with his family and friends. The suite continues with two pieces (not performed this evening) which portray the bride singing to her mother and sister that she is going to leave them soon and her mother lamenting her departure. However, her friends try to cheer her up by singing and resembling her to the most beautiful and gracious doe. The suite culminates in a circle dance by the crowd in front of the groom’s house after their return. They are calling the groom’s mother to come out and meet her daughter-in-law, who could help her as a water-bearer, a milk-maid, a floor-sweeper and, of course, a head-bumper!

In the second half, we will commemorate the 75th anniversary of Komitas’ passing by performing five hymns from the Armenian Divine Liturgy. We will perform the Komitas’ original setting for a male chorus. I find these pieces masterfully composed and haunting. Each one of Komitas’ works is an invaluable gem indeed, and I do hope that his music will soon find its place in the repertoire of the choruses around the world.

Works by Daniel Yerazhisht, Sergey Aghajanian, James Gozalian, and Barsegh Kanachian will be presented in the final section of tonight’s concert. Daniel Yerazhisht is a contemporary composer living in Armenia and his work, *April 24 (La Minor)*, will certainly be transcendent at this time of year. You will be mesmerized by *To Beeyo* and *Leylaama*, two masterful compositions of S. Aghajanian in Persian dialects. J. Gozalian’s *Dsidsernak (Swallow)* will take you to Ashtarak in land of Armenia and, finally, you will discover the wittiness of B. Kanachian in his *Shoosho* and *Dsenkele-Menkele*.

This is the sixth concert of Armenian music that we have brought to the Bay Area since I joined Bay Area Classical Harmonies in 2007. The Seemorgh Ensemble will continue to sing and we look forward to growing to thirty singers with permanent core members and a packed performance schedule! If you would like to assist with this unique effort in any capacity, please do not hesitate to help us accelerate our progress.

Thank you for choosing to be here this evening and I hope you will enjoy the concert.

Best wishes,

Artin Der Minassians
Artistic Director, the Seemorgh Ensemble

* Vahan M. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, Published by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) of America, 1958.

A Transcendent Homage

A Choral Tribute to the House of Torgom

Aravot Loosaber	Komitas
Ter Ketso Doo ezHays	Komitas
Ov Medsaskanch Doo Lezoo	Komitas
Es Geesher Loosnak Geesher	Komitas
Garoon A	Komitas
The Wedding Songs (Suite)	Komitas
Prayer	<i>Yerknits getsnits soorp...</i>
The Bridegroom's Attire	<i>Mer Takvorin inch piti...</i>
The Blessing	<i>Gatsek berek Takvoramer...</i>
The Prayer	<i>Orbnyal barerar Astvads...</i>
Praise of the Bridegroom	<i>Mer Takvorn er Khach...</i>
Banter	<i>En dizan pet pet dizan...</i>
The Praise of the Bride	<i>Yeghnik doo vor sarn es ardsel...</i>
<i>Soloist: Bridget O'Keefe</i>	
Circle Dance	<i>Takvori mer doos ari...</i>

INTERMISSION (15 minutes)

From the Armenian Divine Liturgy	Komitas
The Vesting	<i>Khorboort khoreen...</i>
The Preparation	<i>Barekhosootiamb mor ko...</i>
The Holy Sacrifice	<i>Marmeen teroonakan...</i>
The Kiss of Peace	<i>Kreestos ee mech mer haytnetsav...</i>
The Lord's Prayer	<i>Hayr mer vor herkins es...</i>
April 24 (La Minor)	Daniel Yerazhisht
<i>Felicia Chen, Christine d'Allancé, Audrey Howitt, Jennifer Kay</i>	
To Beeyo (of Fars province, Iran)	S. Aghajanian
Leilaama (of Geelan province, Iran)	S. Aghajanian
<i>Soloist: Felicia Chen</i>	
Dsidsernak	J. Gozalian
<i>Soloist: Jennifer Kay</i>	
Shoosho	B. Kanachian
Dsenkele	B. Kanachian
<i>Soloist: Bridget O'Keefe</i>	

Please silence all watches, pagers, and cellular phones before the concert begins. No audio, video recording or photography is permitted during the performance.

Translations of the Texts

Aravot Loosaber

The illuminator morning of the land of Armenia, this flower-filled northern meadow,
The former illuminator† and bearer of shining crown, Apostle Thaddeus, why have you gone so far?
O, children of Zion start dancing and rejoice!

By the power of Holy Spirit the world has been created,
A great light has shone to the nation of Torgom‡,
Holy virgin Sandookht§ has been transformed from heavens,
Apostle Thaddeus, why have you gone so far?
O, children of Zion start dancing and rejoice!

Ter Ketso Doo ezHays

Lord, keep Armenians and brighten their lives,
Present your mercy to them from above, so they will live here (on earth) with you.

With your power convene our universally banished nation at land of Ararat, our birthplace, which now belongs to other nations.

Ov Medsaskanch Doo Lezoo

You, the exquisite language, the motherly simple dialect,
Are there anything like your sweetly-sounding words in other places?
When you first sounded to me, O, the first time, it was the simple words of love.
My first time faltering of you has not yet vanished from my mind.
My sweet mother tongue, remain unwavering, stay for ever,
Always be a language deserving Hayk**,
Remain blossomed, stay young.

What a bitter affliction there is in my heart when a foreign place and language,
Catches and pulls me to its way, ah, my heart is bleeding.
Oh, my heart can never like that alien language.
No, not that one! I only like my sweet language which greets me with love.
My sweet mother tongue, remain unwavering, stay for ever,
Always be a language deserving Hayk,
Remain blossomed, stay young.

Es Geesher Loosnak Geesher

Tonight is a moonlit night.
Vay le le ...
Snow has decorated the ground.
Who has ever seen a lover to forget her sweetheart? Whoever forgets, she deserves a big punishment!!

Turn your face to me so I can kiss. Vay le le ...
What beautiful curved eyebrows and red cheeks you have. Who has ever seen ...

O girl, I want to bear all your burden. Vay le ...
Of the fire of your love, I'll kill myself. Who has ever seen ...

You listen to me and do everything I say. Vay le le ...
I will convince your mother and get her approval! Who has ever seen ...

† St. Thaddeus lived before St. Gregory the Illuminator. Hence, he is the "Former Illuminator."

‡ Armenians derive themselves from Torgom, a descendant of Gomer, and call themselves *the House of Torgom*.

§ Sandookht stands forth as the first virgin martyr in the roll of the martyrs of the Christian Church; she is known in Armenian Church literature as *Shooshan anooshabooyr*, i.e., "The sweet-scented lily."

** The traditional ancestor of Armenians.

Garoon A

It's springtime and it has snowed,
 Vay le le, vay le le, vay le le le le.
 My sweetheart has become cold toward me,
 I wish the evil person's tongue will dry up.
 Sweetheart you devastated me,
 Vay le le, vay le le, vay le le le le.
 You took away your love from me,
 I wish the evil person's tongue will dry up.

The Wedding Songs

Prayer

From heaven and earth, with the holy power that tree, which was a tender flower, blossomed and it wreathed in green and red.
 With the holy power of Etchmiadsin that tree, which was a tender flower, blossomed and it wreathed in green and red.

The Bridegroom's Attire

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| – What could our King (i.e., the groom) need? | – A linen shirt, indeed! |
| – What could our King need? | – A beautiful belt (red sash), indeed! |
| – What could our King need? | – A fine pair of socks, indeed! |
| – What could our King need? | – A fine pair of shoes, indeed! |

The Blessing

Go and bring the bridegrooms' mother so she might grace us with her presence and, by kneeling before the sacred wedding table, wish her best to our King.
 – May God bless him.^{††}

Go and bring the bridegroom's father to come and open the door of the cellar, and take out the sash and the finest clothes he's kept there for the adornment of our King.
 – May God bless him.

Go and bring the partridge of the mountain to come, sing, and share our joy and, by kneeling before the sacred wedding table, wish God's blessing to our King.

The Prayer

Hallowed and gracious God,
 Blessed be Thy will, our creator,
 We've dressed him up and decked him out,
 And laid the cross upon his chest.

Praise of the Bridegroom

Our King [is wearing] his cross and his crisscrossing stripes,
 His youthful, sunny head, adorned with a crimson crown.

Our King [is wearing] his cross and his Armenian crisscrossing stripes,
 A fine King he is, sitting on his fiery steed.

Banter

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| – Tell me, what are those big mounting piles? | – They are none other than our village lords. |
| – Tell me, what are those warbling sparrows? | – They are none other than our deacons. |
| – Tell me, what is that radiant sun in the sky? | – He is none other than our King. |
| – Tell me, what is that moon behind the clouds? | – She is none other than our Queen (i.e., the bride). |

^{††} When someone brought a gift and showed it to the guests, they would respond with this blessing.

The Praise of the Bride

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| – O doe, what mount have you grazed upon? | – I have grazed on mount Masis. |
| – O doe, where have you quenched your thirst? | – I have drunk the water of the icy spring. |
| – O doe, on which mountain have you slept? | – I have slept on Armenian mount Ani. |
| – O doe, which tree have you rubbed against? | – I have rubbed against the gum tree. |

Circle Dance

Mother-in-law (mother of the King) come out! See what we've brought to you!
 Mother-in-law come out! We've brought a water-bearer to you!
 Mother-in-law come out! See what we've brought to you!
 Mother-in-law come out! We've brought a milk-maid to you!
 Mother-in-law come out! See what we've brought to you!
 Mother-in-law come out! We've brought a floor-sweeper to you!
 Mother-in-law come out! See what we've brought to you!
 Mother-in-law come out! We've brought a head-bumper to you!

From the Armenian Divine Liturgy**The Vesting**

O mystery deep, unknowable without beginning, you adorned your heavenly dominion,
 Ranks of fiery spirits wear splendid glory as a chamber of light unapproachable.
 With power ineffably wondrous you created Adam in Godly image,
 In the paradise of Eden where joy abides you vested him with glory and grace.
 Through the sufferings of your Only-born all creatures are renewed,
 Immortality is restored to humans adorned in vestments indomitable.
 Heavenly King, protect the stability of your holy Church,
 And keep the worshippers of your name always in peace.

The Preparation

O Christ, through the intercession of your virgin mother, receive the prayers of your servants.
 With your blood you enlightened the Holy Church brighter than the heavens.
 And as the order of the angels in heaven, you ordained within the Church the order of apostles, prophets and holy teachers.
 We priests, deacons, acolytes and clerics, offer incense before you, O Lord, in the example of the Prophet Zechariah. Accept from us this offering of incense as you accepted the sacrifices of Abel, Noah, and Abraham.
 Through the intercession of your heavenly hosts keep steadfast always the Holy See of the Armenian Church.

The Holy Sacrifice

The body of the Lord and the blood of the Savior are before us. The unseen powers of heaven sing and proclaim unceasingly: holy, holy, holy, Lord of powers.

The Kiss of Peace

Christ among us is now revealed,
 God eternal is here enthroned,
 The voice of peace now resounding,
 The call is given for the holy greeting;
 Now is the Church become one soul through the embrace that bonds us all,
 Hostility is now removed and love is spread amongst us all.
 Now, worshippers, raise your voices high, give praise together as of one mouth to our God, three and yet one, whom seraphs praise in heaven above.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

April 24 (La Minor)

April 24, what a tragic day! I have named you A Minor.
That day, the executioner with his sword killed Armenians blithely and cut them into pieces.
And forever I am cursing that cruel day of the genocide.
Now, by the (genocide) memorial, the white roses of my soul have blossomed.
April 24, you the tragic day, the violin of my soul is crying A Minor.

To Beeyo

Come ye and sit next to me.
O dear, the cure of my pain, O flower!
You did not come, girl, and I'm devastated,
In the sorrow of being away from you, O my dear, I am ill and pale.

Leilaama

She is my Leila, O dear!
My God, she is my Leila!
She is the most beautiful, she is my unique lewd.
I want you to be mine!

Dsidernak

Swallow, you the little bird of springtime, tell me where you are flying to that fast.
Ah, swallow, fly to my birthplace Ashtarak and build your nest under the roof of the homeland.
Beautiful swallow, depart and fly fast to the Armenian land, to my birthplace Ashtarak.

Shoosho

Shoosho would walk in the fields and the soles of her shoes (sandals) would clack,
She would stroll in the vineyard; clever Shoosho, lovely Shoosho!
Shoosho would go to work the land and the sun would shine on her neckline (neckband),
Whoever sees her, his spirit will elevate; clever Shoosho, lovely Shoosho!
No mountain apple is as sweet as you, no mountain gazelle can compare to you.
Wherever you are, just call me there; clever Shoosho, lovely Shoosho!
Shoosho is like a deer, like a gazelle! Shoosho is so gorgeous with her long, long hair!

Ah, lovely lass, o dear sweetheart, your house is so close to our house,
We can even walk to each other's house barefoot.
Ah, lovely lass, o dear sweetheart, our house is across from your house,
Enough of those flirtatious leers, ah, lovely lass, o dear sweetheart!
Mountains of Sasoon are always very fuggy but its breeze and streams are very lovely!

Dsenkele

Tweet, tweet, chirp, chirp,
A thorn I gave, some bread I got; the bread I gave, a lamb I got; the lamb I gave, a bride I got; the bride I gave, a
saz (a musical instrument) I got!
The saz I took and strummed, and thus I took up minstrelsy!
Tweet, tweet, chirp, chirp!

About the Seemorgh Ensemble

The singing of the Seemorgh Ensemble was described as “*lustily*”, “*creating panoply of stirring sounds*”, and “*raising the rafters*” in San Francisco Classical Voice, San Francisco Chronicle, Oakland Tribune, Mercury News, and Contra Costa Times after the Seemorgh Ensemble and the Oakland East Bay Symphony joined forces at the majestic Paramount Theatre to conclude the *Notes from Armenia* concert in January 2010.

To revitalize over a century-old Armenian and Iranian choral and operatic heritage and to achieve the highest level of choral performance, Artin Der Minassians joined Bay Area Classical Harmonies in 2006 and out of this collaboration the Seemorgh Ensemble was formed. The Seemorgh Ensemble was invited by San Francisco City Hall to take part in the city’s 2007 celebration of Persian New Year (Norooz), which was hosted by Mayor Gavin Newsom and Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi. In addition to *Notes from Armenia*, notable performances of the Seemorgh Ensemble over past few years are *The Ever-Ringing Belfry: The Legacy of Komitas* (2009) and *From Constantinople to Tbilisi: An Armenian Legacy* (2008).

Seemorgh (also Simorgh, Simurgh) is a legendary bird in Persian literature. Literally translated “Thirty-Birds,” it has been cleverly used by Fareed Eddeen Attar (1142–1220), one of the greatest Persian Sufi mystic poets, in his *Mantegh Attayr, The Conference of the Birds*, to explain how the group effort of thirty birds led them to a superior destiny, becoming a Seemorgh. Attar’s ingenious interpretation, the symbolic association of birds with beautiful singing, and the obvious collaborative nature of a chorus, among others, were the motivations for choosing “Seemorgh” as the name for this ensemble.

About the Ensemble Members

Malcolm Catchatoorian was born in Calcutta, India, of Armenian parents, and immigrated to the United States. He studied at the College of Notre Dame in Belmont, CA, and received his BS in Biology. He has always had a passion for music. He started singing with San Mateo Congregational Church, College of Notre Dame Choir, and for forty years with Masterworks Chorale where he is still a member. He has performed with Masterworks all over Europe and Brazil. The highlight of his career was a performance of Verdi’s *Requiem* at Carnegie Hall in 1989. He loves traveling, singing, and sports.

Felicia Chen grew up in the Bay Area and graduated from UC Berkeley, where she has been a featured soloist in numerous concerts, including *The Messiah*, *Chichester Psalms*, and Mendelssohn’s *Lobgesang* Symphony-Cantata. Felicia recently made her solo debut with Berkeley Symphony Orchestra in MacMillan’s *Seven Last Words* from the Cross. She is also at home on the opera scene, having performed the roles of Lakmé, Yum-Yum, Pamina, Papagena, Fiordiligi, Countess Almaviva, Barbarina, Linfea, Gretel, Meg Page, Suor Genovieffa and Suor Dolcina. Felicia is an alumna of Seattle Academy of Opera’s Accademia d’Amore, Bay Area Summer Opera Theatre Institute, SongFest Apprentice Program, and San Francisco Early Music Society. In 2011, she will be in residence at the Academie Internationale d’Ete de Nice and Internationale Sommerakademie der Universität Mozarteum Salzburg.

Andrew J. Chung has sung with numerous vocal ensembles including San Francisco’s Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and numerous University of California Berkeley organizations: the Opera Workshop, Chamber Chorus, University Chorus, Collegium Musicum, and Gospel Chorus. He has appeared as one of the aria and recitative soloist in *Passion According to Saint Matthew* by J.S. Bach with UC Berkeley’s University and Chamber Chorus. In 1998 he founded the group Bay Area Classical Harmonies (BACH) chamber orchestra and chorus and in 2004 he founded the Bakersfield Opera Company. As director of BACH he regularly conducts and sings with the ensemble in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2002 he was chosen conductor of the Berkeley Summer Symphony Orchestra leading Beethoven’s 5th Symphony and Berlioz’s Roman Overture. With Cal Opera he conducted the fully staged opera, *Die Zauberflöte*. He has sung principal roles at North Bay Opera and San Francisco Lyric Opera. Andrew sang the role of Leporello in both BACH and Bakersfield Opera production of *Don Giovanni* and served as the music director for Spotlight Theater production of Steven Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd*. He served as the music director at the Claremont Country Club and presently as a music director for the All Saints Lutheran Church in Novato. Recently, he has sung the role of Pallas (Dick Cheney) in Oakland Opera Production of Handel’s *Agrippina*. He also has

recently participated in California Conducting Workshop and in June, he will be revisiting his favorite opera role, Leporello from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Redwood Symphony.

Christine d'Allancé grew up in the town of La Rochelle in France. Among various groups, she has sung with the chorus of Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral, in the bay area with the Pacific Mozart Ensemble and for the third season with BACH. Christine studies vocal technique and opera repertoire with Audrey Howitt. She is the mother of a beautiful eight-year-old girl and has a Massage Therapy practice in Berkeley. Christine is very excited to be part of the Seemorgh Ensemble.

Colin Hamilton joined BACH in June of 2010 and has performed as a baritone with the San Francisco Choral Society, Berkeley West Edge Opera, and other choral ensembles. He studied music at University of Oregon and teaches piano and guitar in the Bay Area, in addition to performing as a guitarist, pianist, bassist, and singer. He holds a BA in Psychology from UC Santa Cruz. For more information on Colin or to hear audio samples of his music, visit www.chamiltonmusic.com.

Audrey Howitt sings with San Francisco Symphony Chorus and has sung with the San Francisco Chamber Singers (now Volti) under the direction of Robert Geary. Representative opera and musical theatre roles include Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, Flora in *La Traviata*, the Mother Abbess in the *Sound of Music* and Nettie in *Carousel*. Ms. Howitt teaches voice professionally and is an associated voice teacher with Piedmont East Bay Childrens Choir, San Francisco Girls Chorus and the Head Royce School. She maintains a private studio in Alameda. In addition, Ms. Howitt is licensed as an attorney and a Marriage and Family Therapist. Performance anxiety is the subject of her thesis for a master's degree in Vocal Pedagogy from Holy Names University.

Jennifer S. Kay received her BA in music at The University of California, Santa Cruz and has performed with opera companies all over the Bay Area ever since. Some past experience includes chorus in: *The Rake's Progress* with Oakland Opera Theater; *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* with Berkeley Opera; *Carmen* and *Roméo et Juliette* with San Francisco Lyric Opera; *Carmen*, *Die Fleigende Holländer*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *La Bohème* and *Don Giovanni* with Opera San José. Miss Kay has been seen in the role of Follower in Tom Dean's debut of *White Darkness* with Oakland Opera Theater, Flora in *La Traviata*, the Alto Soloist in Handel's *Messiah*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* with Capitol Opera Sacramento/Davis, and Paquette in *Candide* with Cinnabar Opera Theater. Most recently she was seen as the Alto soloist in Mozart's Requiem with BACH.

Carmen Kestekyan has been with BACH for the past year. She has been singing ever since she was in the third grade and has been in various choral groups throughout the Bay Area. Carmen took private vocal lessons during her college years at the University of San Francisco where she was involved with an all women's ensemble as well as the University Choir. Carmen takes pride in singing the National Anthem in front of hundreds during her graduation ceremony this past December from USF.

Vasken Ohanian is a twenty-year-old musician from Fresno, CA. Currently he is studying composition in the studio of Elinor Armer at the San Francisco conservatory. As a singer, the majority of his work has been in the theater. He has starred in roles such as Amahl in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Tommy Albright in Lerner and Lowe's *Brigadoon*, and Sky Masterson in Frank Loesser's *Guys and Dolls*. Apart from singing, he has extensively studied violin and piano. Vasken hopes to continue his musical education in an effort to become a world renowned orchestral conductor.

Anahit Ohanyan was born in Etchmiadzin, Armenia and started singing at age ten. She was very fortunate to sing in numerous churches when she was in fifth grade. She took private vocal lessons in Armenia and currently sings in the St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church of Oakland. Anahit has been with BACH for the past year.

Bridget O'Keefe has sung with various groups in the Bay Area including UC Berkeley University and Chamber Choruses, Cal Opera, B.A.C.H., Sacred and Profane, The Baroque Choral Guild, Chora Nova, and Masquers Theater. She was also church soloist for the First Church of Christian Science, Richmond and soloist and Assistant Children's Choir Director at Arlington Community Church, Kensington. Currently she enjoys most music activities with her two sons, Ethan and Owen. She is excited to be rejoining B.A.C.H. and the Seemorgh Ensemble for this concert series.

Russell Rhodes has lived in the Bay Area for most of his life and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Linguistics at UC Berkeley. He began singing in choirs in high school and has been singing with BACH on and off since 2004. He is very excited to be singing Armenian choral music with the group once again.

A Physician in the East Bay, **Stephen Sarafian** has sung with BACH on three previous projects in recent years. He is also a member of the Sacred and Profane Choir, and has enjoyed participating in Choral Music since high school.

Jeffrey Sykes is a Bay Area native and avid choral singer. He has performed with various local groups, including the UC Berkeley University Chorus, BACH Ensemble, the Seemorgh Ensemble, and various other ensembles. A graduate of UC Davis, Jeffrey works in finance by day. He spends his free time singing with his lovely wife, Felicia Chen.

Artin Der Minassians considers science and engineering as his wife and choral music as his mistress! Born in Tehran, Iran, Artin came to the US to attend UC Berkeley where he received his Ph.D. degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences. During his tenure at UC Berkeley, he sang extensively and was involved in music curriculum as well. He was the founding director of the Persian Chorus and directed the group with a very successful performance at the Florence Gould Theater of San Francisco's Palace of The Legion of Honor in April 2005. After joining BACH, Artin directed the Seemorgh Ensemble at San Francisco City Hall in 2006 as part of the celebration for the Persian New Year. He also conducted the BACH Chorus in *European Jewels and Armenian Pearls* and *From Constantinople to Tbilisi: An Armenian Legacy* concerts. He directed *The Forgotten Tales of Armenia* at Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland as part of BACH's Last Friday at Pro Arts concert series. In 2009, he was invited by the San Francisco Girls Chorus to coach Chorissima, the Grammy-winning concert, recording, and touring ensemble for *Transcendent Voices* concert. His latest engagement was with Oakland East Bay Symphony in January 2010 when he prepared the chorus for *Notes from Armenia* concert which received raving reviews in the media.

Friends of the Seemorgh Ensemble

The Seemorgh Ensemble would like to acknowledge the kindness of the following individuals for their financial support. Ticket sales account for only a small portion of our concert production income. It is because of the generosity of the following people that the Seemorgh Ensemble is here for your enjoyment today. Thank you!

To become a supporter of the Seemorgh Ensemble, please see the contribution form in this booklet.

Bryan and Valina Agbabian	Phillip and Rolly Dobbins	Haiganoush Preisler
Marine Arakelians	Frank and Nectar Kaiser	Rafik and Shakeh Sarkissian
Evelyn Boyd	Ara and Anait Markosian	Hagop and Tiriza Stephanian
Armen and Nelly Der Kiureghian	Karnig and Santoukht Mikaelian	Norma Yaglijian
Artin Der Minassians	Dr. Allen and Mrs. Erika Odian	

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Last but not least, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco, St. Vartan Armenian Church in Oakland, and St. Paul Armenian Church in Fresno and respective Parish Councils for hosting our concerts.

About Composers

Soghomon Soghomonyan (Komitas Vartapet) (1869–1935), was born in Anatolia, Turkey, in the town of Koutahye. He lost his mother when he was less than one year old and ultimately become an orphan when he was only 11 years old. “He was a frail, weak, pale boy, always thoughtful and kind. He was dressed poorly,” one of his classmates recalled about Komitas. He could sing perfectly, and no wonder in Koutahye he was nicknamed “a little vagrant singer.”

In 1881 the priest of Koutahye had to leave for Etchmiadsin to be ordained a bishop. At the request of the Catholicos he brought the gifted orphan boy with him to study at the Etchmiadsin Church Seminary. Twelve-year old Soghomon was selected out of the other 20 orphans to study at the Seminary. As it was forbidden to speak Armenian at that time the boy spoke Turkish and when being greeted by the Catholicos Gevorg IV, he replied, “I don’t speak Armenian, if you wish, I will sing.” Then with his fine soprano voice he sang an Armenian sharakan (a church hymn) without understanding the words. Due to his exclusive aptitude, Soghomon overcame all the obstacles in a very short time and learned perfect Armenian.

In 1893 he finished studying at the seminary, was ordained a “Vardapet” (priest), and acquired his new name “Komitas” - the name of the outstanding poet of the VII century and the author of sharakans. At the seminary Komitas was assigned to teach music. Along with teaching, Komitas organized a choir, an orchestra of folk instruments, and treated folk songs. In the autumn of 1895 he left for Tiflis to attend musical college. However, when he met the composer Makar Yekmalyan, who had received his education at the conservatory of St. Petersburg, he changed his mind and started studying and taking a course on harmony by that composer. These studies became the original forerunner and the firm basis for his gaining the European technique of composition.

The further events of Komitas’ life had to do with the large music center in Europe – Berlin, where he went to study under the protection of the Catholicos, and being financed by the largest Armenian oil magnate Alexander Mantashyan, Komitas entered the private conservatory of Professor Richard Schmidt. During these academic years he had an opportunity to “communicate” with European music, continually enriching the supply of knowledge, and engaging in musical criticism. Upon the invitation of the International Music Association he held lectures devoted to Armenian Church and contemporary music in comparison with Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish music.

In September 1899 Komitas returned to Etchmiadsin and started his musical activity right away. In a short period he radically changed the system of teaching music in the seminary, organized a small orchestra and perfected the performance level of the choir. He visited various regions of Armenia treating and writing down thousands of Armenian, Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish songs. He started serious scientific research work, studied Armenian folk and church melodies, and worked on the decipherment of Armenian khazzes and on the theory of voices. In various countries Komitas appeared as a performer and propagandist of Armenian music.

Komitas focused on the themes concerning folk music and revealing the content of folk songs. No doubt such world outlook had to result in an inescapable conflict between Komitas and the Church. Gradually, the indifference of new leaders, negative attitude of the backward group of church figures, gossip and slander increased so much that it poisoned the life of the composer: the man who remained in the imagination of the contemporaries as an absolutely worldly man. The conflict turned so tense that Komitas sent a letter to the Catholicos begging to release him and let him create and live quietly. This request remained unanswered, and the persecution of Komitas became more obvious. In 1910 Komitas left Etchmiadsin and went to Constantinople. There he expected to find an environment that would understand him, protect him, and encourage his activity; and where he would be able to fulfill his dreams.

During World War I, the government of Young Turks initiated their monstrous program on violent and inhumane extermination of part of the Armenian people. In April 1915, Komitas was arrested together with a number of outstanding Armenian writers, publicists, physicians, and lawyers. After the arrest, accompanied by violence, he was deported far away to Anatolia where he became a witness of the brutal extermination of the nation’s bright minds. In spite of the fact that due to the intervention of influential figures, Komitas was returned to Constantinople, the nightmare he had experienced left a deep, ineradicable impression on his soul. Komitas remained in seclusion from the outer world, absorbed in his gloomy and heavy thoughts – sad and broken.

In 1916 Komitas’ health deteriorated and he was put in a psychiatric hospital. However, there was no hope that he would recover. The medicine was powerless against the destructive disease. The genius of Armenian music found his final shelter in Paris, in the suburban sanatorium Vil-Jouif where he spent almost 20 years of his life. On the 22nd of October the life of the Great Komitas came to an end. In the spring of 1936 his remains were transported to Armenia and buried in Yerevan – in the Pantheon of prominent art figures. No less tragic was the destiny of Komitas’ creative legacy. The majority of his manuscripts were destroyed or lost all over the world...#

Virtual Museum of Komitas (<http://www.komitas.am>)

Grigor Danielyan (Daniel Yerazhist, i.e., Daniel the Musician) (b. 1946), was born on January 18, 1946 in Yerevan, Armenia. He graduated from the Tchaikovsky Music School of Yerevan where he studied violin. He then entered the Komitas State Conservatory and graduated with a degree in Music Theory in 1971 and in (symphonic and operatic) Conducting in 1974. He continued his graduate studies at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow and graduated in 1985.

Danielyan was the first in Armenia to found ecclesiastical music ensembles such as *Sharakan* (later became *Tagharan*), *Gandzer* (of the National Radio), and again *Sharakan*. With Sharakan ensemble he toured Moscow, Leningrad, Romania, Bulgaria, and Austria and took part in ecclesiastical music festival in Holland (1984) and participated in a festival dedicated to the 300-year anniversary of the births of Bach and Handel held in Baltic states (1985).

Daniel Yerazhisht has published more than 400 articles and essays on music theory in Armenia, the United States, and France. In 1982, he joined the Department of Conducting at the Komitas Conservatory and directed the ensemble of the traditional instruments at the Folklore Department of the same school and became an Associate Professor in 2001. In 2006 he was appointed as the chorus director of the Center for Sacred Music in Armenia.

Sergey Aghajanian (1929-2006), was born in Anzali, Iran, to an Armenian family. After graduating from school, Aghajanian became the leading member of Ashot Patmagrian's musical theater. Soon after, Patmagrian introduced him to Serge Khodsiev, the Russian professor of violin at Tehran Conservatory. After Khodsiev, Sergey continued with Rouben Gregorian§ and played regularly as a soloist with Tehran Symphony Orchestra. During the same time, he started a string quartet with three other Armenian students of Tehran Conservatory and performed numerous successful concerts. Later on, he moved to Yerevan, Armenia, where he taught at Romanos Melikian music school from 1959 to 1976. He was one of the top supervisors of musical programs at Armenia's national radio. In 1964, he was invited to Yerevan Polytechnic Institute to establish an orchestra of student string players and become its music director and conductor. Through thirty years of its life, this orchestra participated in youth music festivals in Armenia, USSR, Finland (1964), Czech (1967), Poland (1982), and the USA (1975) winning 5 gold medals and several awards.

He went back to Tehran once again in 1990 as guest speaker of a conference on the 1000th anniversary of the completion of Shahnameh (The Epic of Kings), the renowned Iranian poet Ferdowsi's masterpiece. He was so inspired from his visit that after returning to Armenia, Aghajanian composed a series of choral arrangements based on Iranian folk tunes. You will hear two of these arrangements, *To Beeyo* and *Leylaama*, tonight. Among his compositions are "Polyphonics" for string orchestra based medieval tunes and hymns, "Polyphonic Cantata" for symphonic orchestra and chorus (1975), Concerto for wind orchestra (1966), "Four Mashtotsian Songs" (1972) and other choral works. "Khachkar," a piece for flute, clarinet and bassoon, was his first challenge in which he attempted to compose polyphonic arrangements of single-line folk tunes and hymns without altering even a single letter or sound in the main melody. Sergey passed away in Yerevan, Armenian, in 2006.§§

Barsegh Kanachian (1885–1967), one of the most illustrious pupils of Komitas, stands out as a unique composer who has continued his master's legacy. Kanachian was born in Rodosto, a small town near Constantinople. Growing up in a politically unstable area during precarious times, he was able to survive by moving first to Bulgaria, then to Romania, and back to Constantinople around 1908, always pursuing his musical studies. It was in Constantinople that he met Komitas and became his pupil for three years. In 1921, Kanachian and four other pupils of Komitas left for Paris to further their musical training. In 1922, he went to Egypt, where he composed his first choral work, *Dalilo*. From 1926 to 1930 Kanachian lived in Cyprus, where he taught at the Melkonian Institute. There, he composed, among others, his masterpieces *Hoy Nar* (choral) and a revised version of *Oror*, originally composed in 1913.

Despite the fact that he never lived in Armenia, he was able to absorb the essence of the Western Armenian musical fountain of Komitas, and infuse it with his own creativity to produce songs of great appeal and charm which continue to delight listeners. Having lived in countries of Middle East with considerable Armenian populations, mostly in Lebanon, he composed with his unique style, a fusion of post-Komitas choral tradition, the Western Art Song (Lied) and his individualism and originality. In the development of his unique musical style, Kanachian enriches the music by inserting choral passages reminiscent to the sounds of orchestral instruments.

In 1932 Kanachian settled in Beirut, Lebanon. His presence prompted the establishment of the Goosan Armenian Musical Society and Goosan semi-professional choral group in 1935. Unfortunately, his eyesight began to fail him in the late 1940s, making his work more and more difficult each year. In 1960, almost totally blind, Kanachian and his wife Kristiné moved to Baghdad, Iraq, where two of their three daughters lived. He passed away in Beirut, Lebanon, where he had gone for medical treatment.***

§§ Repatriate Iranian-Armenian Faces, Bapken Chookazian, Editor, Gint Publishing, 1997, Yerevan

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