



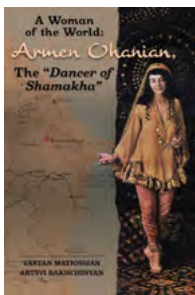
Arts & Culture

Dr. Vartan Matiossian And Artsvi Bakhchinyan To Discuss *A Woman Of the World: Armen Ohanian*

FRESNO — Dr. Vartan Matiossian and Artsvi Bakhchinyan will present a lecture on their new book, *A Woman of the World: Armen Ohanian, the 'Dancer of Shamakha,'* in a virtual presentation on Saturday, September 17, at 10 a.m. (Pacific time)/1 p.m. (Eastern time)/9 p.m. (Yerevan time). The presentation is part of the Fall 2022 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program.

A Woman of the World is Volume 16 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno.

A Woman of the World is a fascinating chronicle of the life of dancer and author Armen Ohanian (1888-1976). She was a well-educated woman born in



an Armenian family in the Caucasus and fluent in half a dozen languages — truly a “Woman of the World,” who lived through times and places as diverse as the Russian Caucasus, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, the Belle Époque in France, the Roaring 1920s in the United States, the early Soviet Union, and ended her days in Mexico after living an eventful life cloaked in mystery. She bridged multiple cultures as an actress in the Caucasus, a theater director in Persia, a writer in France, and a translator in Mexico. Above all she was an acclaimed dancer from Asia to Africa, from Europe to America with the monikers “dancer of Shamakha” and “the Persian dancer.” Mounting on a wave of Near and Far Eastern dances sweeping the West, she belonged to a category of dancers that conceived of choreographies nurtured by their culture of origin.

Matiossian is a historian and literary scholar with a broad range of interests in Armenian classical and modern culture. He has published extensively in Armenian, Spanish, and English, including eight books, almost two dozen translations, and several edited volumes. He is currently the Executive Director of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Church in New York.

Bakhchinyan is a scholar specializing in the history of the Armenian Diaspora and culture, as well as a writer and translator. He is the author, editor, and translator of some twenty books, and a frequent contributor to journals and periodicals in Armenian, Russian, and English. He is a regular correspondent for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. He is a researcher at the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia (Yerevan).

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesohanian>. For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, follow @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState on Facebook or at the Program website, <https://fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies>.



A master class in Armenia in summer 2021

Akhtamar Quartet on Solidarity Tour in Lebanon

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In June 2021, the Brussels-based Akhtamar Quartet conducted a three-week concert tour in Armenia, performing 20 concerts free of charge for varied audiences, with the aim of bringing hope, optimism and moral support through the power of music. Armenians were still suffering from the effects of the November 2020 war, and the Covid pandemic. The tour was a resounding success, and as a result, they have decided to repeat the experience, this time in Lebanon.

In 2020 that country and its people were shattered by the Beirut port explosion, which further aggravated an already dramatic economic crisis, compounded by the pandemic; a deteriorating financial situation, rising unemployment and massive unemployment have created a situation producing “the worst kind of spiritual distress.” In presenting their solidarity project, the Akhtamar Quartet writes that “when both actions and words cease to function, solidarity between people remains.” And it is the aim of the “Music 4 Lebanon” project to remoralize vast layers of the population, by bringing them the healing power of music.

As they did in Armenia last year, they plan to offer 15 concerts throughout the country, again for free. They begin in Beirut on September 6, and will perform in Baakline, Mashghara, Joub Jannine, Hammana, Baalbek, Hermel, Mish Mish, Bqerzala, Halba, Tripoli, and Bsharre, before returning to Beirut on September 19. Again, they have scheduled performances for people who are particularly vulnerable under the current crisis conditions, patients in hospitals, children in schools, residents of nursing homes and refugee camps. In Yerevan, they had presented a master class with students at the Komitas Conservatory and in Beirut they will organize an encounter to share music and experiences with students at the National Conservatory. Again, for children, they will present their musical/theatrical show, “The Dream Makers,” which had energized and delighted youngsters in Gyumri.



Members of the Akhtamar Quartet

The name of the quartet was inspired by the *Armenian Miniatures* by Komitas/Azlamazyan, a central component of the ensemble’s performances since its inception. Based in Brussels, where it was founded in 2014, the quartet features violinists Coline Alécian and Jennifer Pio, violist Ondine Stasyk, and cellist Cyril Sinon. The ensemble was one of six chosen for the Tremplin Jeunes Quatuor of the Paris Philharmonic in 2016, and in that same year, it received the second prize at the Festival Musiq3 of Belgium. Last year they came in third at the International Johannes Brahms Competition. They have performed widely throughout Europe, as well as Armenia, and in 2020 released their first CD, with *Komitas Miniatures* and “an Armenian quartet” composed for them by Eugénie Alécian, a pianist and composer from Paris whose niece is a violinist with the quartet.

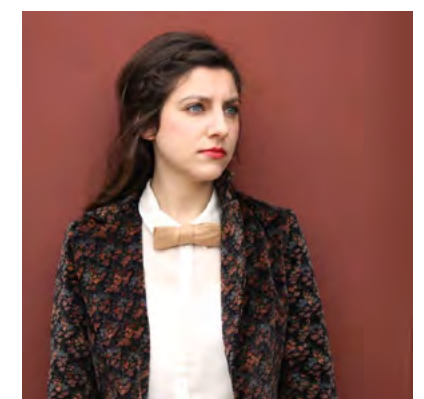
Two Questing Young Minds:

Tenny Arlen and Sharisse Zeroonian

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Published posthumously by the ARI Literature Foundation (Yerevan, 2021), with the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the poems in *To Say with Passion: Why Am I Here?* show a depth of perception unusual for a 20-year-old. In these poems, Tenny Arlen mourns the loss of a child’s endless questioning, his endless “Whys.” Indeed, the persona in the poems trusts that if grown-ups did not, with their “I know”s, destroy a child’s sense of wonder and his curiosity, and instead “asked more questions, we would probably have no wars.” When man wants to be the center of it all there can be no holi-



Tenny Arlen

ness left in nature. “We set on fire, we saw, we empty,” writes Arlen. She, in fact, wonders if “climbing the silver staircase to the moon” would help answer life’s “inexplicable questions.” Even if life were to grant that possibility, however, it is a possibility Tenny Arlen was denied. The fledgling poet lost her life in a car crash a few months before starting the doctoral program in comparative literature she was admitted into at the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor.

Arlen’s questions posit a world full of fear, devastation, sadness, and especially loneliness. “I was born dead/voiceless,” confides the persona. Nonetheless, there is no outrage, no anger, in Arlen’s attempts to give expression to the devastation. No fear of the darkness either. Perhaps a degree of sadness that she is, “After all the promises and the waiting, alone in an empty room,” that the “You and I” has changed to “I and I.” The pain is always confronted with courage and with awe. The questing artist is determined to create. “Words are within me,/they follow me,/they sing to me,/they talk to me,/I am not alone,” she insists.

While words do offer the persona some respite from the loneliness and the “vast silence,” “they can offer no solace.” Her older sister tells her of fairies that would whisper to her from under her pillows, but the younger sister never heard them “behind the trees and in the spiders’ cobwebs:” “I never saw them, not even one.” “Fairies are an illusion,” writes Arlen in “Memoirs,” a poem in the collection. We are ultimately alone.” “We die in silence.”

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