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ATKEN

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE
ATKEN ARMENIAN FOUNDATION



A "SCHOOL" YEAR IN REVIEW

Armenia's best-kept secret in *Georgia?*, p. 11



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ELEVATE YOURSELF

The Atken Armenian Foundation has been discovering, serving, and guiding young music talent in the regions of Armenia for the past 10 years. Our work in poverty reduction is growing rapidly through new initiatives and collaboration. The last 12 months have proven to be very productive; more funds have correlated to greater results. For example, we are thrilled this year that 4 of our young Fellows have been accepted into top Music Schools in the country and are on the path they have dreamt about. On the regional development side, in a few short years, our agro-modernization projects will bring in 6-figure revenue to local farming communities.

This first edition of *ATKEN* is a recap of what we have been up to the last 12 months. It is a great way to catch up for you non-Facebookers! You will meet mostly village children who only a couple of years ago had never heard of Scarlatti or Brahms and today are singing in Italian and German! You will get to know a young man who served on the border and saw his comrade

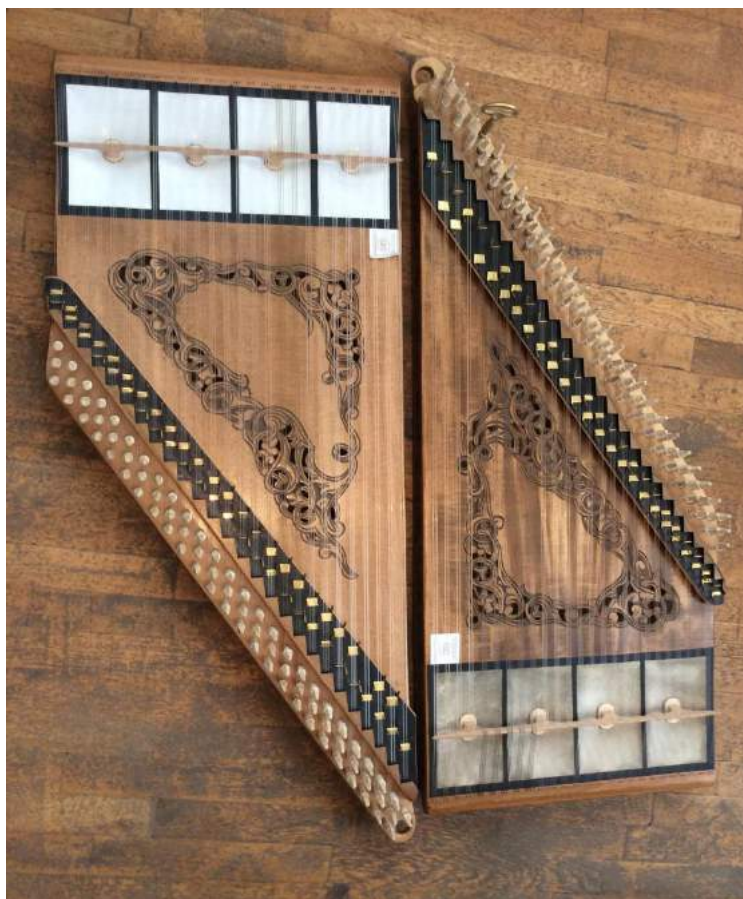
killed by an enemy bullet last April, who today is preparing for lessons with a top voice teacher at the Komitas Conservatory.

At *ATKEN*, we would like to hear **your** stories, comments, questions, and experiences. At this early stage, we need your feedback. Students, teachers, parents, donors and readers alike, tell us what has been your experience with the AAF? Why is it important to help Armenia for you? Why not start or support a project with the AAF and tell your friends about it through *ATKEN*?

We appreciate your interest and are happy to have you as a reader of *ATKEN*. The AAF is proud of the work it has done but truly needs your help to continue. We hope you will enjoy this first issue and will join the AAF family where we *Elevate ourselves by Elevating others!*

VAN ARMENIAN EDITOR

Canadian-born Van Armenian is a professional violinist, teacher, and the president of the AAF. He regularly plays and tours with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and was recently a concertmaster of the All-Armenian Orchestra's inaugural concert in Yerevan. He may be reached at: vanarmenian@yahoo.ca or contact him through the [AAF Facebook Page](#).



A MUSICAL CHRISTMAS

V. A.

We start with a pivotal moment in the AAF history: December 16, 2016, our first fund-raising concert. We set up a great organizing team and found the ideal hosts for this concert: His Excellency, Ambassador of Armenia to Canada, Mr. Armen Yeganian and his wife Maria. Our beloved soprano and board member Aline Kutan truly made the evening a magical one and a real demonstration of the power and glory of Music.

This concert would not have been possible without our principal sponsors Arden & Christine Dervishian, and our partner sponsors Levon & Ana Afeyan, Hasmig Armenian, the Araxie and Hagop Kestekian Foundation (Haig & Virginia Misakyan), Drs. Jirair & Rita Kuyumjian and an anonymous donor.

The impressive participation of the 40-some young choristers from the McGill Conservatory Children and Youth Choirs under Penni Clarke, the Mashtots Choir of AGBU under Gohar Manvelyan, as well as the HAYK Vocal

Quartet and the Atken Ensemble helped make this a very special and unforgettable experience.

Our Montreal community friends got together to volunteer and contribute in kind, namely: Garo Nazarian of Melan Print, Floriste Glamour, Ara Samson and Patrik Boghosian photographers, George Maalouf of Imprimerie G.E.G., and Pianos H. Nalbandian.

Many courageously risked the treacherous weather and parking conundrums to bring the venue to near capacity. The AAF board plans to make this an annual event in Montreal, so keep posted, another concert on the horizon in December!

*“Thank you Atken Armenian Foundation
for the beautiful Christmas concert
and wonderful projects
in Armenia!”*

— Maria Yeganian —



MAGNIFICENT MARO

V. A.

When board members Antoine and Sheila Terjanian introduced Maro Simonyan to the AAF 6 years ago, we found an energetic and determined woman who wanted to bring musical culture to the children of her hometown of Yegheknadzor. The AAF gave her a mission: build a serious children's choir and head for the top!

For the past 3 years, this choir has been winning top prizes in Armenia and even a Gold Medal in Georgia. There is a magical atmosphere when you enter the decrepit Culture Center; Maro has created a place where the love of music is palpable.

Thanks to Maro's efforts, members of this program, such as Ani and Narek, are entering their first year at the top music school in Armenia, the Komitas Conservatory. Another, like the talented Nané (pictured on p. 8), is headed for a career as a folk-pop singer or perhaps even a choir conductor herself. Our piano class is growing, students, such as Seda and young Gayane are practising diligently and showing promising results.

"I wish many successes to all your initiatives as they are honest, kind and patriotic."

— Maro Simonyan —





MHER, THE MUSIC MAN

This talented young man eats and breathes music. We know he will go far, AAF has his back.



PIANO LESSONS WITH TIGRAN

Regular visits to "Little Y" motivate and guide our top talents.



FLUTOPIA IN THE MOUNTAINS

Two amazing Yamaha flutes on loan to the local music school.

DISPATCH VAYOTS DZOR

V. A.

A PILLAR OF THE AAF INITIATIVES

The AAF has a strong foothold in the Vayots Dzor region. All our agro-development takes place there and a good part of our music education programs are based in the regional capital, Yegheknadzor (affectionately known as *Little Y* by AAF folk).



Apart from having a bank of several instruments on loan to local music schools (such as two beautiful Qanons, 2 flutes, 2 violins, and 4 pianos), we have invigorated the area musically speaking with the Armenian Children's Choir and have added Voice, Piano, Music History, Theory, Dictation, and Solfeggio classes. Every time our award-winning choir shows up in the capital Yerevan (*big Y*), heads are turned!

Our instrument and voice classes are aided with regular visits from specialists Tigran Berkelyan and Herminé Gevorgyan. A weekly

English course is also given to all our students by Verjiné Zabounian.

Over the past years, the AAF has helped the healthcare sector of the area with donations and equipment, has provided much need scholarships to students of the Gitelik University, and has renovated a number of rooms in the Culture Center as well as a park and a playground. Board members Antoine and Sheila Terjanian, with the help of Naira Sargsyan of the Syunik NGO oversee it all with loving care on a volunteer basis.



LE PETIT PRINCE

V.A

While in *Little Y* this April, we came across a wonderful group of young actors performing "The Little Prince" by Saint-Exupéry. We were truly impressed by the quality and devotion to the art form. Soon after, they were invited to present it in Yerevan! Unfortunately, they did not have enough funds to make it there. The AAF quickly went into action and found funding from our friend Nancy Torosian, director of Montreal's Hay Pem Theatre

Troupe. The costumes and sets were all made by the students and the director, Hrach Hovhannisyan. Impressive things happening in the *Little Y* indeed!

*"The time for action is now.
It's never too late to do something."*

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry —

LE PETIT PRINCE



A SOLDIER'S TALE

V. A.

When it comes to harrowing tales, we all know the situation on the border with Azerbaijan is one of great concern. Young Narek from our program in Vayots Dzor completed his obligatory military service in February of this year. His unit was posted on the border and was in the middle of it all during the vicious Azeri attacks in April 2016. His friend was killed next to him in one of the worst attacks. A year later when we saw him in Armenia, he was still visibly shaken, but thanks to his determination and the help of our teachers, Narek managed to be accepted in the Komitas Conservatory.

Surprisingly, these schools ask for irrational tuition fees that have no relation to the

income of most citizens of the country. Even with the military service and "living outside the capital" discounts, the cost was absurd for Narek. When he received the phone call from our representative Chaghig Arzrouni that the AAF would find a sponsor and guarantee his tuition as long as he continues his fantastic efforts, he was so taken aback that there was a full minute of silence. . .

The AAF does not allow talented and hard-working children to be forgotten due to circumstances of the country; we will support them as long as they continue to elevate themselves to the enormous challenge of making it in the music world.



MIRACLE IN JAVAGHK &... ITALY!

LIANA KHOSHBEKYAN

A few years back we met young Anna in a small town in Javaghk, Georgia. In January of this year we selected, now 13-year-old Anna for a special prize: a fellowship from the AAF in support of her extraordinary talent. Anna regularly spends 2-3 weeks in Yerevan, hosted by our wonderful voice specialist Herminé Gervorgyan, for intensive daily voice lessons.

After only a few months, she won a competition in Georgia with the possibility to participate in the finals in Italy. We took her to Italy where she competed with candidates 5 to 7 years older than her. Anna was one of 4 candidates selected by an

international jury and Nino Lezhava, Director of the Academy Tebaldi Del Monaco, to receive the **Special Prize**: *A full scholarship to participate in a 2-week masterclass in Italy in 2018, room & board included!*

This is a talent to watch, mark our words! The AAF believes that talents such as Anna will be future ambassadors of Armenia, your support is needed to continue this work.

*“Make the AAF your **voice** in Armenia this year.”*

— AAF —

MIRACLE IN JAVAGHK & ...



BEES & TREES

V.A

AAF board Members Tony Halepli and Antoine Terjanian, in collaboration with the Syunik NGO, have spearheaded important work in the Horticulture Development sector of the Vayots Dzor region. This is an initiative that will bring in 6-figure income to the region in a few short years; a project that will change living conditions of many families who live in poverty.

The goal of the project is to contribute to the reduction of poverty in rural areas and to promote the development of cooperation between rural communities in Vayots Dzor and

modernize their farming capabilities. For this, part of the program will comprise theoretical and practical compulsory courses. To date, with donations from Tony we have planted 4000 high-render fruit trees, and have given over 50 new beehives to villagers. We are grateful to the Syunik-Development NGO for their guidance and expertise in helping us make this project a reality.

“He who plants a tree, plants a hope.”

— Lucy Larcom —

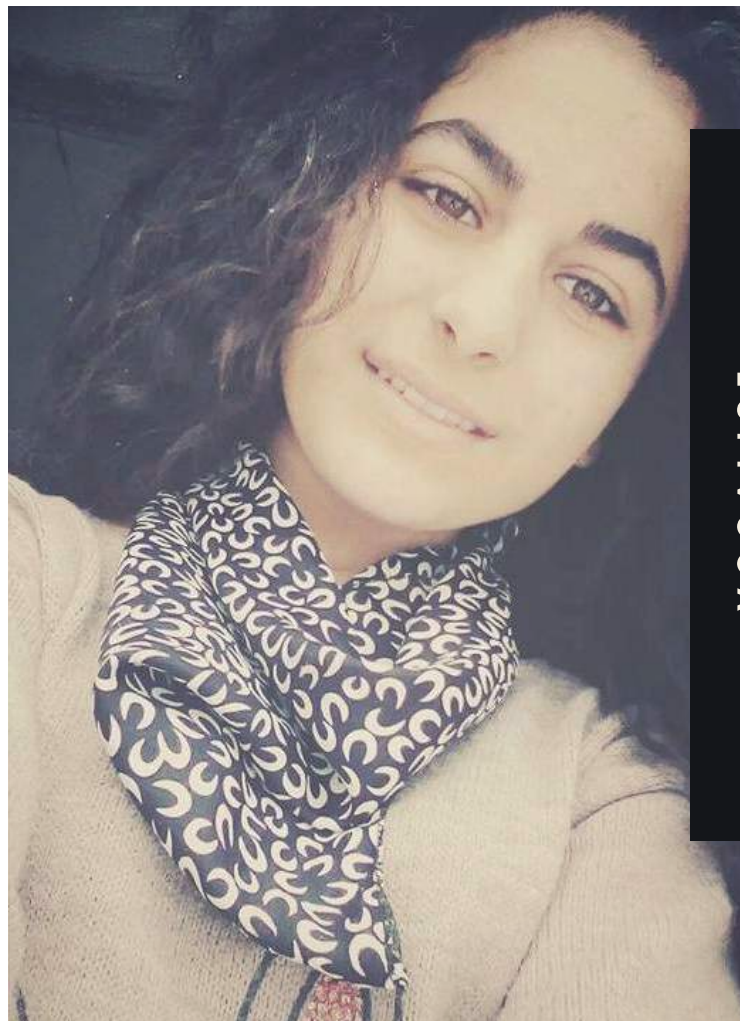




“DOING NOTHING FOR OTHERS
IS THE UNDOING
OF OURSELVES.”

— HORACE MANN —

DONATE
NOW



VOCALISE

L. K.

3 years ago the AAF started a Vocal Talent program for the regions of Armavir and Kotayk. Under the leadership of soprano Herminé Gevorgyan (pictured left) and Tatevik Movsesyan results are rolling in! Two of the top talents, 16-year-old Ani (pictured) and Arminé, were accepted with full scholarships to a top music college in Yerevan. They will be studying with Herminé's own past teacher.

In June of this year the scope of the vocal program grew: Herminé and pianist Elen Kirakosyan, gave masterclasses in Ninotsminda, Javaghk (in Georgia) at the local music school. This is part of the AAF's commitment to helping regional music schools get quality input to improve pedagogical levels. Both faculty and the students were thrilled with the sessions.

The work of the AAF paying off one student at a time! We promise there is more to come!



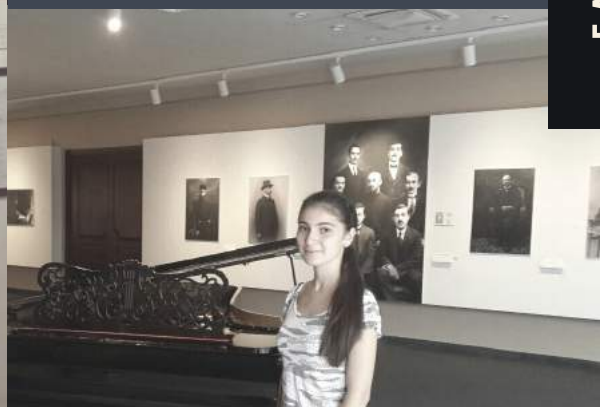
CHRISTINA AND ANNA AT THE PARAJANOV

Part of the prize was to visit important cultural pillars in the capital. Parajanov Museum is a must see.



YEREVAN NIGHTS!

Teacher and student, a bond for life.



CHRISTINA MEETS KOMITAS

Visiting the museum dedicated to the musical core of the nation: Komitas.

EMERGING ARTISTS

V. A.

AAF Fellows, vocalists Christina from Vernashen (Vayots Dzor) and Anna from Javaghk were selected this year for a special gift. During the two weeks in Yerevan, they had daily lessons with our voice specialist Herminé Gevorgyan, and went to see museums and galleries. A true cultural immersion for these exceptionally diligent and musical youths.

2017 ATKEN ARMENIAN FOUNDATION
SCHOLARSHIP FOR EXCELLENCE

WINNERS

TWO WEEKS OF DAILY LESSONS AND
ACTIVITIES IN YEREVAN



Christina from Vayots Dzor & Anna from Javaghk

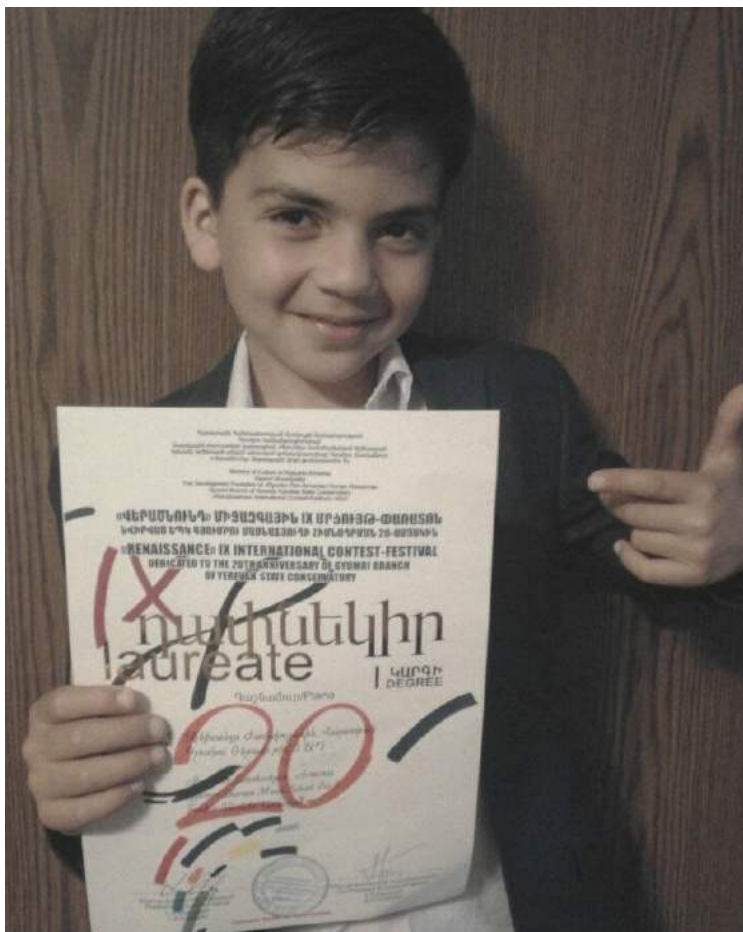
SPLENDID SIBLINGS

L. K.

When we heard of 13-year-old **Mariam**, a wonderfully talented prize-winning flute student in Gyumri, we knew she would be the ideal candidate for an instrument we received from Professor Simon Channing, Head of Woodwind at the world-renowned Royal College of Music in London. The timing of the arrival of this flute couldn't have been better: her own flute was no longer functioning in lower registers! With the help of the much-improved instrument, she quickly won the chance to perform with the local symphony orchestra. The possibilities are limitless now!

Her brother **Alexandr**, a pianist that the AAF has taken under its wing this year (the AAF provides him weekly lessons with our specialist Tigran Berkelyan in Yerevan), won first prize at a competition securing him a TV interview (pictured) and the opportunity to participate in a tour taking him to Austria, Italy, and Slovenia for concerts and masterclasses, all expenses paid. 10-year-old Alexandr has an extraordinary talent and we are convinced, with Tigran's guidance, he will develop into a wonderful artist! Our promise to you, dear AAF supporters, is that your donations always go a long way!

SPLENDID SIBLINGS





“CHILDREN SEE MAGIC
BECAUSE
THEY LOOK FOR IT.”

— CHRISTOPHER MOORE —



ARMINÉ AND ANI S., *ANDIAMO!*

Our vocal program quickly paying off with these two AAF Fellows now enrolled in a top music college, full tuition paid.



ANI G., *FROM MOUNTAIN TO CITY*

AAF Fellow of immense talent starting studies now at the Komitas Conservatory.



NAREK, *FROM SAME MOUNTAIN TO CITY*

AAF Fellow of immense talent also starting studies now at the Komitas Conservatory.

ON THE GO!

ON THE GO!

V. A.

AAF Fellows Ani G. and Narek, from the mountain village of Karaklugh, Ani K. from Aradashen, and Arminé from Ejmiadzin auditioned and got in their desired music schools in Armenia. They will be working with the top voice teachers in the country. Many thanks to our specialists Maro, Herminé, and Tatevik for getting them to such high levels. Now, the sky is the limit!



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you?

AAF
administrative costs:
NONE

Tax receipts provided;
every amount counts

The Atken Armenian
Foundation is a
registered Canadian
Charity

Have you been touched
by the AAF
and its activities?

Send us a short article
and we'll publish it
in the next issue
of ATKEN.

Contributors to this issue:
Van Armenian and
Liana Khoshbekyan

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Subject: ATKEN

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