

*PART FOUR/QUATRIÈME PARTIE/ ՉՈՐՐՈՐԳ  
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*MUSIC, LITERATURE, PRINTING:  
A FEW FACETS OF A RICH ARTISTIC AND  
CULTURAL LIFE*

*MUSIQUE, LITTÉRATURE, IMPRIMERIE :  
QUELQUES ASPECTS D'UNE RICHE VIE  
ARTISTIQUE ET CULTURELLE*

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# Armenian choirs in Lebanon, 1930-1980: A bridge between the past and the present

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## **Introduction**

After the genocide and the arrival of Armenians in Lebanon in the early 1920s, singing in choirs became the first art that flourished in the Armenian society. This is due to the fact that music, being a social art, adapts itself to all conditions of society, and through music individual and collective ideals can be expressed.

This chapter will cover six choir conductors active in Beirut between 1930 and 1980. In the chronological order of their careers in Lebanon, they are: Hagop Uvezian, Parsegh Ganatchian, Hampartzoum Berberian, Dikran Kassouny, Ashod Badmakrian and Emmanuel Elmadjian.

These conductors and their choirs contributed tremendously to the cultural survival of Armenians during the formative stages of the community in Lebanon. Along with schools, singing in choirs constituted one of the cornerstones in preserving Armenian culture. Cut off from their homeland, Armenians felt the need to form choirs for patriotic purposes and the revival of their native traditions. The Armenian song was the best way to recover Armenian identity in foreign lands. This is because there is some relationship between mourning and creativity. Pollock has found that "losses due to death can result in bereavement reactions"<sup>1</sup> in the form of creativity, and "the artist is compelled to create by his need to recover his lost past."<sup>2</sup> Singing, with its comforting character, became an inherent part of community life, starting from the orphanages and primary schools.

Lebanon attracted persecuted Armenian refugees who settled in Beirut and its suburbs, and thanks to the complete freedom that they enjoyed, they gradually built their churches and schools, and founded cultural and youth organizations. The musicians presented here, are all survivors of the genocide who settled in Beirut, formed choirs sponsored by Armenian cultural and musical associations, and continued their creative years in Beirut; we will evaluate the role that these choirs played in the lives of Armenians and the

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<sup>1</sup> George H. Pollock, "The mourning process, the creative process, and the creation", in David R. Dietrich and Peter C. Shabad, eds., *The problem of loss and mourning: psychoanalytic perspectives*, Conn., International Universities Press, 1990, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Segal, 1952, p. 199 as cited by Pollock, p. 34.

local community, which benefited from their new creations, and greatly encouraged and appreciated their annual choral concerts.

These choirmasters, who had already started their musical careers in the homeland, forged a bridge between the old musical legacy of Armenian songs unknown to the masses and the cultural activities of the present. The choice of these six conductors and their choirs was made considering the longevity of their careers in Beirut – a minimum 10 years without interruption – and the role they played in the Lebanese Armenian community.

My sources are predominantly of primary nature. The study adopted the qualitative approach, using three main instruments to collect data: firstly, an 18-item questionnaire<sup>3</sup> was distributed to individuals who had sung in choirs. Secondly, personal interviews were conducted with people who had worked with these conductors or had known them personally. (I was fortunate to interview Elmadjian personally). Thirdly, the Armenian newspapers of the period were of capital importance; they published numerous reports, articles, concert programs and pictures pertaining to the organization, the activities and the concerts of these choirs. A handful of published books were also useful in obtaining information. The collected data was then examined, classified and analyzed.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Hagop Uvezian (1891-1943)***

Hagop Uvezian was the first musician, who settled in Beirut and taught singing to Armenian refugees. He formed four-part mixed choirs, encouraged musically talented students in the orphanages, benevolently taught the poor and published ten music school textbooks in Armenian.

Uvezian was born in *Marash* on February 15, 1891, to an evangelical, music-loving family. His father, Avedis, the director of the *Eben Azar* orphanage in *Marash*, was fond of music, especially the violin, and his mother was a singer with a beautiful voice.<sup>5</sup> From his childhood Uvezian got interested in music. In 1900, he started taking violin lessons; in 1904, the sudden death of his father forced him to suspend his studies at the Academia of *Marash* and start earning his living by playing the violin.

In 1911, Uvezian with young music lovers founded the *Yerkasiradz* (song loving) association. This association's first choir concert played an important

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix p. 259, the translated version of the questionnaire.

<sup>4</sup> I conducted this research in 1982 for my thesis as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Department of Armenology at Haigazian College.

<sup>5</sup> For the biography of Hagop Uvezian, see Krikor Bogharian, *Aintabagank B. Mahartsan* (in Arm., for *Memories from Aintab*), Beirut, Imprimerie Atlas, 1974, XX, Volume 2, pp. 428-435.

role in the progress of his musical talent: he got invited to teach music at the Central College of Turkey (CCT) in *Aintab*. Uvezian was already an excellent violinist, and used to play several instruments. He had studied in Geneva new methods of teaching singing and training instrumental ensembles (fanfares), and he had earned the certificate of "Excellent Musician" for his outstanding musical talent.

In 1912, Uvezian's teaching career started in *Aintab*, where he founded a choir, an orchestra and a brass ensemble. Between 1913, and 1915, he organized public concerts of choirs and orchestras receiving appraisal even from the Turks.<sup>6</sup>

He was deported to Aleppo in 1915, where he formed choirs and taught music prior to settling in Lebanon, "the country of Armenian orphanages,"<sup>7</sup> in February, 1921. He started teaching music, singing and forming choirs and instrumental ensembles in the Armenian Orphanage of *Jounieh*, the American Near East Relief Orphanage of *Jbeil*, and the Institute for the Blind in *Ghazir*, significantly transforming the orphans' academic and social lives. He knew well the secret of making music and singing attractive. He was very patient and forgiving, and because of that he could inspire unlimited love and enthusiasm towards music. During rehearsals his skills of teaching and conducting became apparent. The orphans learned new pieces faster, and every week he added new pieces to their repertoire.<sup>8</sup>

In 1924, when the dispersion of the orphans began, Uvezian settled in Beirut, where in 1925 he got married to Satenig Zibarian, who was music loving and had a beautiful voice. He founded a 25-30-member choir that performed mainly religious Armenian songs. The same year he founded *La Maison du Piano*, his music shop for selling and repairing musical instruments, and a music-printing house called *Nevak* (music), through which he published his music textbooks. Unfortunately, his pioneering work in publishing Armenian music textbooks was not duly appreciated because of unfavorable conditions and the lack of trained music instructors in the Armenian schools of that time.<sup>9</sup> However, the Armenian press recognized Uvezian's great contribution to Armenian cultural life by spreading Armenian songs among Armenians and foreigners from 1922 to 1933.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.169.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 431.

<sup>8</sup> *Houshamadyan Djibeyli Ameriguian Vorpanotsi: 1920-1925* (in Arm., for *Memorabilia of Djebeil's American Orphanage*) Beirut, Imprimerie Hamazkayin, 1969, p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> K. Bogharian, *ibid.*, 1974, p. 433.

<sup>10</sup> S. Varjabedian, *Hayere Lipanani metch*, (in Arm., for *Armenians in Lebanon*) Beirut, 1981, vol. 3, p. 139.

In 1932, Uvezian established a forty-member orchestral ensemble with a choir, *Kenar* (lyre), which gave its first concert on January 22, 1933.<sup>11</sup> The programs of his annual concerts included Armenian patriotic and religious songs as well as oratorios. Moreover, Uvezian's choir performed Magar Yegmalian's four-part Mass on the Sunday following Easter every year at the Saint Elijah Armenian Catholic church, in the presence of the French high commissioner and local dignitaries.<sup>12</sup> Under his leadership, the fanfare of the *Jounieh* orphanage was invited to perform on special occasions, such as the American University of Beirut (AUB) commencements. In 1936, the eighty-voice choir of the *Sipan* Musical Association, with a symphonic orchestra, gave its first concert under Uvezian's leadership.<sup>13</sup>

On June, 19, of the same year, his students organized Uvezian's career's 25th anniversary celebration at the Memorial Hall of the Anglo-American church. During this celebration, Dikran Kassouny, his most talented student, who would continue Uvezian's work after his death, conducted the choir, and several people paid tribute to Uvezian's dedicated and indiscriminate service to the entire Armenian community. Rev. Yenovk Geukgeuzian offered Uvezian a silver baton on behalf of the First Armenian Evangelical Church.

Uvezian passed away on February 6, 1943. On March 21, 1943, a memorial service was organized in the Anglo-American church under the auspices of the three Armenian religious leaders. Dikran Kassouny conducted the choir that sang from Uvezian's compositions *Knir Im Palig* and *Hay Abrink*. One of the speakers was Parsegh Ganatchian, the composer, and Emmanuel Elmadjian performed *Der Getso* harmonized by Uvezian.<sup>14</sup>

In 1947, four years after Uvezian's death, his memory was kept alive through his composed songs during summer concerts. The press reported, *There was a time the late Hagop Uvezian used to regularly organize summer concerts for the vacationing populations in the summer resort Chtaura.... This time, under the auspices of the Armenian Evangelical Church, a three-member committee was formed to continue this tradition of presenting choir concerts including in the program Uvezian's compositions.*<sup>15</sup> His pivotal role as the first music educator, choir and instrumental ensemble conductor,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> Several people who filled out the questionnaire (1982) witnessed to this fact.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 123

<sup>14</sup> Hovhannes Tilkian, one of the speakers on that day, provided the program, Ganatchian's speech's manuscript as well as his speech's manuscript.

<sup>15</sup> *Aztag*, (Armenian Daily/Lebanon), October 5, 1947, "Chtaurayi nvakahantese" (in Arm., for "The concert of Chtaura") signed by H. Tilkian.

violinist and composer is very significant since it coincides with the tough beginnings of the Armenian community in Lebanon, especially because Lebanese music institutions could not serve as role models since they were also in their initial stages of development.

### *Parsegh Ganatchian (1885-1967)*

In 1932, the Armenians of Lebanon were very fortunate to welcome Parsegh Ganatchian, the most gifted pupil of the great Armenian musician Gomidas. During a 50-year career (half of which was spent in Beirut), Ganatchian continued his master's legacy, spreading the pure Armenian song to the survivors of the genocide and hence providing them with spiritual and emotional support. Ganatchian was born in 1885, in Rodosto, a small town near Constantinople. His father was a modest cobbler. During the massacres of 1890s, like other families, the Ganatchians abandoned their home and emigrated first to Bulgaria, then to Romania, around 1908, back to Constantinople, where he founded Constantinople's first orchestra that he named *Knar* (lyre). During all these moves, he had always pursued his musical studies in violin, solfège, theory and harmony, and played the violin in orchestras.<sup>16</sup> Ganatchian had been a student of Nathan Bey Amirkhanian (a graduate of the Berlin Royal Conservatory), George Bouyouk and finally, Gomidas.

In 1910, his accidental meeting with Gomidas on the train going to San Stefano guided him to his vocation. Ganatchian became a member of Gomidas' 300-voice choir *Koussan* (bard), and then he had the chance to become one of the six chosen pupils. For the progress of his musical talent, the period of time from 1913, to 1915, was crucial; he studied with Gomidas the art of harmonizing popular Armenian songs and choir conducting, and sang in Gomidas' 300-voice *Koussan* choir Gomidas' compositions. But these happy days did not last long; the first world war started and then the mass deportations of Armenians. From 1915, to 1918, Ganatchian served in the Ottoman army, where thanks to his violin playing skill, his life was spared since he used to entertain the Turkish officers by playing Armenian and Kurdish songs on his violin. In 1921, with four other pupils of Gomidas, Ganatchian left for Paris to further his musical training. There, Ganatchian studied advanced music theory, harmony and counterpoint with Professor

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<sup>16</sup> For the biography of Parsegh Ganatchian see, Seza, *Karasnamya hopelyan Parsegh Ganatchiani yerajshdagan kordzouneyoutian (1906-1946) Gensakragan noter*, (in Arm., for 40th Jubilee of Parsegh Ganatchian's musical career: 1906-1946, biographical notes), Beirut, 1946, Edited by the Jubilee Committee.

René Lenormand. Between 1922, and 1932, he toured Aleppo, Egypt, and Cyprus, forming choirs and giving choral concerts. From 1926, to 1930, he taught music at the *Melkonian* Institute in Cyprus, where he composed some of his masterpieces.

In 1933, one year after he settled in Beirut, the public acclaimed Ganatchian's first choral concert in Lebanon. The press described it as "unprecedented, true artistic delight."<sup>17</sup> The audience did not leave the hall before making sure that they would enjoy that wonderful music again within 15 days. The concert was repeated, and the 70-voice choir performed to a full house, this time under the patronage of Dr. Jude, the Director of Health Services. In 1936, devoted music lovers formed the *Koussan* Armenian Musical Society, the first musical association in Beirut. This society, which was close to the *Hamazkayin* Cultural Association, would take care of all the organizational and financial burden of the *Koussan* choir in the coming 25 years, allowing Ganatchian to compose a yearly masterpiece against all odds. Ganatchian also paid tribute to Lebanon by arranging in 1936, the Lebanese and Syrian national anthems for four voices, and harmonizing five Lebanese popular songs to include in his concert programs: 'Aladal'ouna, Zahlé 'Arous, Debek Debek, Bekina, Zahlé Ya Dar Salam. The premiere of these songs took place in the hall of the *L'Orient* daily. *L'Orient's* music critique wrote, *Unlike European composers who take oriental melodies without being able to retain their character, Mr. Ganatchian, on the contrary, constructs his melodies in their characteristic beauty. It is the first time that we hear the Arabic song arranged and harmonized in such a wonderfully charming manner.*<sup>18</sup> Hence, Ganatchian also received recognition from the Arab music-loving public in Beirut. In 1938, he was made Officier d'Académie by the French High Commissioner. On his 25th anniversary concert (1957), he received the prestigious Order of the Cedar for his achievements in the cultural life in Lebanon.

In 1945, Ganatchian lost his eyesight, but his choir continued to give annual concerts; that year's concert took place at the Saint Joseph University concert hall in a moving atmosphere. He also continued composing new gems, with the support of *Koussan* and the entire Armenian community. Year after year, *Koussan* gave annual concerts in Beirut. It also performed in *Zahle*, Tripoli, *Latakia*, Aleppo and Damascus.

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<sup>17</sup> *Yeridasart hayouhi*, Lebanese Armenian monthly journal, (published in 1932-1934, 1947-1968), July 1933, p. 23 "Ganatchiani yerkahantese" (in Arm., for "Ganatchian's choral concert").

<sup>18</sup> *L'Orient*, 1936, cited in *Karasnamiya hopelyan Parsegh Ganatchyani*, p. 28.

*Koussan* performed *a capella* (i.e. without instrumental accompaniment), since Ganatchian, like Gomidas, believed firmly that only through the human voice was it possible to express feelings and ideas in traditional Armenian music, and that European musical instruments prevented the genuine interpretation of traditional Armenian melodies.<sup>19</sup> His lieder and romance songs are accompanied by a piano, but the choral works are sung *a capella*. *Koussan* sang mainly Gomidas' and Ganatchian's own compositions, as well as choral works by Yegmalian, Mehrabian, Altounian, Zakarian and Suny.

The choir members were all amateur singers from different walks of life. The soloists however, had musical education, and some of them – Dr. Emmanuel Elmadjian, Louisa Bozabalian, Mrs. Kristiné Ganatchian (his wife), Koko Srabian, Mrs. Zepur Shant, and Miss Keghanush Ipranossian – were professional singers; the latter who had participated in Uvezian's, Berberian's, Kassouny's and Alexis Butros' choirs as a soloist, used to consider singing in *Koussan* a national duty, "going to rehearsals was like going to church."<sup>20</sup> Until the performance, rehearsals used to last for around five months. Ganatchian used to train the male and female singers separately during the week, and, on Sundays, the whole choir rehearsed together. He used to separate the males from the females so that during the two hours of the rehearsals, when he was teaching the girls, the boys would not sit idle or disturb them. He was very strict and meticulous during the rehearsals. He used to teach by musical phrases, either by singing or playing on the piano. The singers did not have any notes in their hands; they learned the lyrics and the music by heart.

In 1946, the *Koussan* Musical Society organized a jubilee concert celebrating Ganatchian's 40 years of musical career (1906-1946). On this occasion, *L'Orient* daily wrote: *It is possible to rank the Koussan choir, which was trained according to Ganatchian's fine and demanding manner, among the most outstanding artistic events. Thanks to extreme meticulousness, Ganatchian has succeeded in forming a wonderful totality, in which especially the fine nuances, the vocal balance and the perfect musicality are apparent.*<sup>21</sup> (personal translation from French).

His compositions for choir and solo voice were first published in ten volumes in 1947, followed by additional seven volumes the next year. These volumes do not include, however, his incomplete opera, *Apeggha* (1938), and his only sacred composition, the Armenian Mass (1943). There are many

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<sup>19</sup> Alahaydoyan Bedros, "Parsegh Ganatchian" (1885-1967), p. 60, in *Pakin*, Monthly Journal of Literature & the Arts, January, 13th year, No. 1, 1974.

<sup>20</sup> Personal Interview with Miss Keghanush Ipranossian on May 11, 1982.

<sup>21</sup> *L'Orient*, 1946, article signed by A. Doubine, cited in *Karasnamya hopelyan Parsegh Gananatchiani*, p. 45.

recordings of his works. His complete works are now available on three CDs, containing his 23 *a capella* choral compositions, 19 children's songs with piano accompaniment, six original romance songs for voice and piano, and one romance song, which is a harmonization.

His choral compositions are: *Oror* (1913), *Haratch Nahadag* (1918-1919), *Dalilo* (1921), *Hoy Nar* (1927), *Lousnagn Yelav* (1928), *Khnojouyk* (1928), *Razmerk* (1923), *Varteri Hed* (1937), *Nanor* (1943), *Hele-Hele* (1934), *Apegha opera* (1938), *Maralo* (1946), *Choucho* (1947), *Gorani* (1948), *Barerk* (1950), *Sossi* (1951), *Hop Guluzar* (1952), *Nenir Nay* (1953), *Gammerk* (1955), *Hayreni Garod* (1955), *Karoun* (1956).

Ganatchian has harmonized for choir the following songs: *Debek-Debek* (1936), *Zahlé 'Arous* (1936), *Zahlé Ya Dar Salam* (1936), *'Aladal'ouna* (1936), *Bekina* (1936), *Lorke Lorke, Lebanese National Anthem* (1936), *Syrian National Anthem* (1946), *Der Getso*.

Ganatchian's children's songs are: *Maireni Tebrots* (*Hymn to Our School*), *Park Mair Hoghin* (*Glory to the Motherland*), *Tsite* (*The Finch*), *Lousin* (*The Moon*), *Meghou* (*The Bee*), *Sev Ambere* (*The Black Clouds*), *Kiughi Ardoun* (*Morning in the Village*), *Inch Anoush* (*How Sweet*), *Dzengele*, *Mengele* (*A Bird's Song*), *Amber* (*Clouds*), *Menk Ge Sirenk* (*We Love*), *Ardzvignerou Kailerk* (*Girl Scout's March*), *Khnotsi* (*The Chum*), *Jakharag* (*The Spindle*), *Khaghagh Kisher* (*Tranquil Night*), *Yerkanevak* (*Children's Orchestra*), *Dzidzernagin Pouyne* (*The Swallow's Nest*), *Tbrotsagan Kailerk* (*School March*), *Haireni Garod* (*Nostalgia for the Homeland*). Ganatchian's romance songs are: *Dzov Acher*, *Bjingo*, *Tsaikerk*, *Alvarti Yeraze*, *Dzidzernag*, *Oror*, *Ourin*.

Ganatchian lived a very difficult life. He earned his living by giving violin and music lessons. He did not own a piano and he used to compose on his violin held sideways, like a guitar. The Armenian press wrote about this and considered it a scandal, until an anonymous donor offered him a piano.<sup>22</sup> Later, the person who donated a piano to Ganatchian was revealed as Megerditch Messerlian.<sup>23</sup>

Ganatchian died in Beirut in 1967. The Armenian and local presses announced the loss in very sad terms. *Le Soir* daily wrote in bold on its cover page: *La mort du Maître Ganatchian endeuille la famille libanaise. Nous Te Gardons, Maître En Terre Libanaise* (*The Lebanese family mourns Maestro Ganatchian. We keep you, maestro on Lebanese soil*).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Nayiri*, Journal of literature and arts, vol. 3, Aleppo, May 5, 1942, p. 124.

<sup>23</sup> *Nayiri*, vol. 3, September 20, 1942, p. 212.

<sup>24</sup> *Le Soir*, Beirut, May 22, 1967.

Thanks to Ganatchian and his *Koussan* choir, Gomidas' work continued, old Armenian songs were kept alive, new ones were composed, and the Armenian song was introduced to non-Armenians. The Armenian publicist Siran Seza wrote the following in *Yeridasart hayouhi* on 15 May, 1948: *It gives me special pleasure to think that among Lebanon's four major choirs, the choirmasters of the three are Armenians: P. Ganatchian with his Koussan, H. Berberian with his Nayiri, and Dikran Kassouny with his Sacred Music Singers. They say that the fourth choir's conductor, Alexis Boutros, is also one-quarter Armenian.*<sup>25</sup>

### ***Hampartzoum Berberian (1905-1999)***

Hampartzoum Berberian's musical career spanned sixty years. He settled in Beirut in 1932, and for the next 30 years, until his departure for the United States in 1963, he served the Lebanese Armenian community as a choir conductor, music educator, and composer. He gave more than 30 concerts and composed many pieces including 175 solo songs, 145 choral songs, 6 pieces for violin, 15 pieces for piano, 3 operas (*Areknazan*, *Choghig* and *Titer*), symphonies, concertos, oratorios and cantatas.

Hampartzoum Berberian was born in *Adana* in 1905. In 1915, after losing his family to the Armenian Genocide, Arabs kept him until 1917, when he took refuge in Aleppo's Armenian orphanage. One year later, at the dawn of the Armistice, while orphans were taken to Constantinople, he fled to his birthplace, *Adana*, where he received his elementary education along with music lessons. During this time he revealed outstanding musical aptitude; he was chosen to be sent to Vienna to study music, but instead left for Izmir and then to Athens.<sup>26</sup>

In 1923, Berberian studied at the Music Conservatory of Athens, from where he graduated in 1930, as a violinist and a composer. His professors were Igonomiti for composition and Mitropoulos for conducting. Then he furthered his studies in Paris. He gave his first concerts in Athens, where he received warm appreciation from Armenian and Greek audiences. In 1930, he was invited to teach at the Cyprus Conservatory.

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<sup>25</sup> *Yeridasart hayouhi*, May 15, 1948.

<sup>26</sup> For Berberian's biography the following three sources have been used: *Zartonk* daily, October 20, 1950; *H.P. E. Mioutyan album houshamadyan, nvirvadz Ho Yetch Et-i 30amyagin*, (in Arm., for *AGBU's Album memorabilia dedicated to AYA's 30th anniversary, 1930-1961*), Beirut, 1964; Proudian Cecilia, *Spyourki hay yerajishdnere*, pp. 498-509, (in Arm., for *The Armenian composers of the Diaspora*), Yerevan, Hayasdan Press, 1968.

Berberian came to Lebanon and Syria in 1932, where he gave concerts. He settled in Beirut and he taught in several Armenian institutions such as the Armenian College (*Djemaran*), the Seminary of *Antelias*, the Sahagian, Mekhitarist and Armenian General Benevolent Union's (AGBU) various schools.

Gradually, his conducting and composing talents took over. He started forming and conducting children's choirs and song-dance ensembles. *Hamazkayin* organized his first choir concerts in 1933, and 1934, and on March 4, 1933, Berberian's choir concert was under the auspices of Mrs. Debbas (the First Lady). The fifty-member choir of *Djemaran* presented a program that included solo songs by Spendiarian, R. Melikian, Gomidas and H. Berberian, and choral pieces by Ghazarian, Gomidas, Ganatchian, Servantsdian and H. Berberian. Mrs. H. Berberian (his wife, née Serpouhi Takvorian), Zepur Shant and Emmanuel Elmajian were the soloists in this concert. Seza wrote about the concert, *In general it was a successful event.*<sup>27</sup>

That same year (1933), on March 24, H. Berberian had an annual concert, this time with the 8-14 year old students of Sahagian School. Seza wrote in *Yeridasart hayouhi* about this concert, *Many had come to encourage the little singers. The program was modest.*

In the 1940s, his choir was named *Nayiri* (after his daughter) and he featured as a violinist, conductor and composer in the concert programs. In 1945, *Aztarar* weekly (1942-53) wrote about the annual concert that took place at the "Opera" cinema hall: *This year's concert surpassed the previous years.*

The rehearsals of his *Nayiri* choir took place in his 2-room house (adjacent to *St. Haroutioun* church). The members were music lovers and craftsmen, who after their workday met twice a week for the rehearsals; they were pure amateur singers. Tenor and bass met twice; alto and soprano also met twice separately. Berberian used to teach the songs with the help of a piano. The concerts were accompanied either by a piano or later by an orchestra.

H. Berberian and his wife were blessed with four children, one daughter and three sons, all of whom became professional musicians: his daughter *Nayiri* is a singer; *Vahé* is a cellist, *Shahé* a musicologist and *Hratch* a violinist.

In the 1950s, his annual concerts took place at the AUB Assembly Hall.

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<sup>27</sup> *Yeridasart hayouhi*, April 1933, No. 7.

In 1953, Berberian joined the AGBU Zareh Noubar Club's musical life.<sup>28</sup> In 1953, Berberian had a concert tour in the US, where he gave seven concerts and television appearances. After his return, Berberian gave lectures and his annual concert at AUB on May 3, 1953. Seza wrote about this concert: *The Nayiri choir, composed of the graduates of Tarouhi Hagopian, Sahagian and other schools, performed brilliantly the compositions of Gomidas, Satian, Berberian, Khatchadourian, also his cantata "Khorhourt Vartanants" with orchestral accompaniment. The soloists were Mrs. Marie Avedian, Dr. Elmadjian and others.*<sup>29</sup>

In 1956, Berberian conducted the *Gomidas* choir in a concert dedicated to the silver jubilee of the AGBU Armenian Youth Association (AYA) at the UNESCO Palace, in the presence of 2,000 people. During this celebration, Selim Lahoud, the Minister of Fine Arts, honored Berberian with a first class golden decoration. In 1957, Berberian's 120-voice choir *Nayiri-Gomidas* performed again at the UNESCO Palace. Levon Vartan<sup>30</sup> explained this change of name as follows: *His Nayiri choir had died. He called it Nayiri-Gomidas to create continuity, but he did not succeed; in 1958 the choir ceased to exist.*

In 1959, after Armenia's Song and Dance Ensemble's first visit to Beirut,<sup>31</sup> the AYA Armenian Folk Song and Dance Ensemble was formed under Berberian's leadership, bringing together many of old *Nayiri's* singers. Rehearsals took place three times per week from 8:00 to 12:00 p.m.<sup>32</sup> This amateur group's first concert took place on May 28, and 29, 1961, in Beirut. Then they toured Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Jordan and Turkey where they were widely acclaimed.

H. Berberian realized his dream of performing his compositions in his homeland, Armenia. In Yerevan on June 9, 1961, after 15 days of intense rehearsals, he presented a unique concert composed solely of his compositions. This concert became a turning point in his career, since for the first time, professional musicians performed his orchestral pieces, something that was impossible to realize in the Diaspora. Cecilia Proudian speaks highly of Berberian as composer, conductor and educator in her book.<sup>33</sup> Hence, she

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<sup>28</sup> "Music activities at Zareh Noubar Club" in *Tapnebesag* (in Arm., for *Wreath*), an *Album-madian - dedicated to AYA's 30th anniversary (1931-61)*, Beirut 1964 p. 78-79. Also in Levon Vartan's *Hay Yeridasartats Engeragtsoutioone Lipanani mech, 1931-81*, (in Arm., for *Armenian Youth Association in Lebanon, 1931-81*), Beirut 1981 (unpublished), pp. 200-216.

<sup>29</sup> *Yeridasart hayouhi*, May 1953, No. 5, p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Levon Vartan, on May 4, 1982.

<sup>31</sup> S. Varjabedian, *ibid.*, 1981, vol. 3, p. 157.

<sup>32</sup> *Khosnag*, publication of the Regional Committee of AGBU in Lebanon, (1957-present), May-June 1961, p. 308.

<sup>33</sup> Cecilia Proudian, *ibid.*, p. 503.

writes, *Endowed with undeniable creative talent, as well as intense activity in organizing, conducting, pedagogy, and in the musical-public domain, Hampartzoum Berberian is doing priceless work in keeping the flame of Armenian music alight in foreign lands. He is reviving with that flame the dying spirit of patriotism and nationalism of the expatriate Armenian population.*<sup>34</sup>

The AYA Folk Song and Dance Ensemble under his leadership successfully presented Dikran Choukhadjian's comic opera, *Gariné* in 1962.

However, Berberian left for the United States and settled in Boston in 1963, where he continued his musical career, especially in AGBU's musical activities as artistic director. He gave concerts in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno and other towns, as well as in Montreal and Montevideo.

Hampartzoum Berberian's compositions include operas, choral songs for choir and orchestra, choral works with piano accompaniment, *a capella* choir works, sacred songs, solo songs with piano accompaniment, songs for school children, songs for kindergarten children, operettes for children and instrumental works. His large scale compositions for choir and orchestra are: *Sourp Mesrob-Kudin Parke (oratorio)*, *Vartanants (cantata)*, *Requiem Aeternam (3 parts)*, *Aghotk Vaghvan Semin Artchev, Khosk Im Vortoun, Hayasdani Kovke, Khatche, Im Hayasdan (cantata)*, *The Resurrection, The Cross, Lincoln at Gettysburg (cantatas)*, *Yegeghetsin Haygagan (oratorio)*.<sup>35</sup>

His instrumental works include: *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, *Concerto for 'Cello and Orchestra* (this 45-minute work was given its first premiere, by his son Vahé, in 1950 at the AUB Assembly Hall<sup>36</sup>), *Prelude and Variation (violin and piano)*, *Dance Rustique (violin and piano)*, *Caprice (violin and piano)*, *Souvenir (violin and piano)*, *Lullaby ('cello and piano)*, *Dance (violin, 'cello and piano)*, *Legende (piano)*, *Rejoice O Mother (piano)* and others.

Berberian's role as a choirmaster, educator and composer is undeniable in the Lebanese Armenian community. He presented during his concerts his own works, Armenian patriotic songs, and compositions by contemporary Armenian composers.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 500.

<sup>35</sup> Hampartzoum Berberian, *100 anniversary celebration booklet/program*, edited by Armen Urneshlian, Beirut, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Yeridasart hayouhi*, May 1950, No. 7, p. 33.

### ***Dikran Kassouny (1910-1979)***

Reverend Dikran Y. Kassouny, M.D., founded the Sacred Music Singers choir in 1939, sponsored by the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East. The choir sought to promote *the love and the appreciation of sacred music*<sup>37</sup> in Lebanon and functioned until 1948.

Kassouny was born in *Marash* in 1910, to an evangelical and musical family. His father was Reverend Yeghia Kassouny. The deportations took them to Damascus, *Mersin*, and *Adana*, again *Mersin* and then in 1921, Constantinople where he received his elementary education. He studied at the Robert College in Istanbul from 1926 to 1930. From 1930, to 1931, he taught in *Ekiz-Olouk (Kessab, Syria)*. During the academic years 1931-1932, he studied at AUB and in 1932, he earned his Bachelor's degree.<sup>38</sup> He had studied music with his pianist stepmother Yevnigé, with Hagop Uvezian and at the AUB Music Institute.

From 1932, to 1933, he continued his teaching. From 1933, to 1936, he studied in the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, from where he graduated. After serving as a preacher for three years in the Armenian Evangelical Church in Tripoli, he married Arousyag Stepanian in 1939. She became his closest collaborator. From 1941, to 1946, Kassouny was a medical student at the AUB, from where he graduated as a medical doctor and served at the American University Hospital (AUH) for two years. In 1948, he was ordained a preacher and then left for the USA. Dikran Kassouny practiced three careers simultaneously: a career conducting the Sacred Music Singers choir, a career in preaching and a medical career.

During his musical career in Beirut, Kassouny presented to an international audience sacred concerts with a 100-voice and a 25-member orchestra twice a year, at Christmas and Easter. This tradition has continued by his followers after 1948, until present, at the AUB Assembly Hall. All his concerts took place there. The singers were 95% professional, a phenomenon non-existent till 1960, among the Armenian choirs in Lebanon. The members used to meet regularly once a week and paid a membership fee. Punctuality and regular attendance were important rules expected of all members in order to promote perfected group work. Some of the soloists of his concerts were Nedko Etinoff, his wife Arousyag, Henry Bedir, and Chaké Vartenissian.

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<sup>37</sup> This was the aim of the choir expressed in their bylaws. (I received this document and programs from Mr. Hovhannes Tilkian.)

<sup>38</sup> For his biography see, *Vosgemadyan*, Vol. 2, Beirut, 1951, p. 19.

Nedko Etinoff, a lecturer in music and organizer of musical activities for 30 years at the AUB, described Kassouny as a man of great musical talent: *He was a good conductor, ably detecting faults in singers and instrumentalists; he put all his love and knowledge of music to make it known by interpreting it to large audiences and to spur into being other groups and leaders on the musical Beirut scene.*<sup>39</sup> During the 1940s, the AUB administration invited Kassouny to organize extra-curricular musical events for students. He conducted a student choir and orchestra that participated in many events at the West Hall and the AUB Chapel. They also presented light operas and operettes in 1946, such as Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*.<sup>40</sup>

In 1946, during the 100th anniversary celebrations of the Armenian Evangelical Church, Kassouny's choir presented on three consecutive days (April 11, 12, 13) Handel's *Messiah* and pieces taken from Yegmalian's Armenian Mass. About these celebratory days of the highest spiritual enjoyment wrote the Lebanese press and *Vosgemadyan*.<sup>41</sup> The soloists of this concert were Dr. Elmadjian, Etinoff, Mr. D. Abadjian, Chaké Vartenissian and other professional musicians.

He also conducted Elgar's *The Light of Life*, Dubois' *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* (selections), Rubenstein-Gaines' *The Seraphic Song* and Koshetz's *The Ukrainian Passion Trilogy*.

In 1948, the Sacred Music Singers presented Steiner's *Crucifixion* and Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise*, during which the audience participated in the singing, following the conductor's left hand signal (as indicated in the program). Most probably he was the first musician in Beirut to involve the audience during a concert. The press praised the great success of the conductor. This was Kassouny's last concert in Beirut before he left for the USA, where he continued his musical as well as the two other careers.

Dikran Kassouny played an important cultural and musical role during 1939-1948, since he could inspire the young generations with the love and taste for sacred music. He had a great impact on many musicians such as Emmanuel Elmadjian and Alexis Boutros, the conductor of the largest Lebanese choir who started his musical career as a cellist in Kassouny's orchestra.

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<sup>39</sup> See in Appendix, p. 260, the complete text of his testimony written in 1982 on my request.

<sup>40</sup> Nedko S. Etinoff, *Thirty years in Lebanon and the Middle East*, Beirut, 1969, p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> *Vosgemadyan, haruramyā hopelyan* (in Arm. for, *100 anniversary jubilee*), Vol. 1, Beirut, 1950, Compiler/Editor Dikran Kherlopian, p. 260.

### *Ashod Badmakrian (1898-1981)*

Ashod Badmakrian was a maestro, lecturer, author, composer and musicologist, a well-known musical personality in the Armenian communities of the Middle East, America, France and England. He incessantly toured all these countries and organized with local musicians symphonic and choir concerts within a very short period of time of maximum one month. The programs always consisted of Armenian composers' pieces as well as European compositions. A big orchestra always accompanied his concerts.

Badmakrian was born in *Tabriz* to a well-to-do family. In 1912, he entered the Kevorkian *Djemaran* of *Etchmiadzin* where his musical talent thrived. He founded his first choir composed of his classmates.<sup>42</sup> After studying music theory, conducting, music history, philosophy and composition in Berlin for three years (1921-1924), he devoted his life to researching Armenian song and music. In 1925, he married Rose Arzumanian, a professional mezzo and a lieder specialist, who became the permanent performer of his vocal compositions.

In 1926, his musical début was a concert in Paris' Odeon Hall with 60 Armenian singers. Then in 1933, he gave a concert in *Tehran* with an 80-member choir and another concert in *Baghdad* in 1936, with a 90-member choir. And finally in Beirut on July 14, 1936, his wife gave her first recital in Hotel *Sofar*, the director of which had freely offered the piano and the hall. The recital program included European and Armenian vocal pieces. The audience consisted of French, British, American tourists and local people. *Aztag* published an acclamatory article.<sup>43</sup>

In Beirut he faced many difficulties in gathering choristers, since no one was interested in European repertoires; they were used to singing only patriotic songs. For the preparation of his first choir concert in Beirut in 1936, he held two weekly rehearsals with different groups in three different locations: Center of Beirut, Sahagian School (*Nahr*) and AUH, since the choristers could not meet in one place. He combined the three groups for the final rehearsals and gave an *unprecedented symphonic concert*<sup>44</sup> with 60 singers and orchestral accompaniment at the AUB West Hall. The program featured Beethoven's *Fantasy* for piano and orchestra, Mozart's *Requiem* and Badmakrian's *The Wedding of Ninam*, a rhapsody with Armenian themes. The same concert was repeated in 1937.

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<sup>42</sup> Ashod Badmakrian, *Im housherits* (in Arm., for *My memoirs*), Beirut, 1978, Doniguan & Sons Press.

<sup>43</sup> *Aztag* daily, July 1936.

<sup>44</sup> *Le Jour* daily, December 7, 1936.

In 1960, with the organization and cooperation of several cultural associations, Badmakrian's musical career's 40th anniversary was celebrated at the Collège De La Salle in the presence of 1,000 people. He taught courses in Armenian culture and music at the Haigazian College from 1963-1968. During the same period, sponsored by the Lebanese-Armenian Cultural Association (*Gomidias Club*), he formed a prestigious choir with professional singers and gave concerts in 1963, 1964, 1967 and 1970. The soloists were Arpiné Pehlivanian, Garabed Tchaderian, Sirvart Soghigian, Mary Peltekian, Sarkis Koundakjian, Vahé Elmayan and others.

His music textbooks and songbooks were published as early as 1937, and on. Some of them are out of print, such as *Yerajshdaran* (1937), *Hay Yerker* (choir and solo song book), (1941), *Hay Yerker* (2nd publication), *Poonch Hayasdanian Yerkeri* (6 volumes of songs, 1945), *Romances* (solo songs with piano accompaniment, 1964). His other publications include 20 solo songs, romances, and choral songs that he has harmonized, such as *Yar Kula*, *Toutoul*, *Tilpar*, *Sareri Hovin Mernem*, *Lousnage Tsolats Kenats*, religious songs, the *Armenian Oratorio*, children's songs and operettes, such as Toumanian's *Shounn ou Gadun (the Dog and the Cat)* and *Dern ou Dzaran (the Master and the Servant)*, were performed in Beirut and Paris. He also wrote books on Armenian music: *Hay yerke tareri michits (The Armenian song through ages)*, published in Beirut in 1973; Khoren Catholicos sponsored the 2nd edition of this work in 1977; he also published *Im housherits (My memoirs)* in 1978 and *Hadendir yerker (Chosen songs)* in 1980.

Close to Hunchakian circles, Badmakrian lived the last 10 years of his life in Beirut and passed away in 1981. His concerts, lectures, compositions and books greatly enriched the Armenian community's musical life.

### ***Emmanuel Elmadjian (1914-1985)***

Dr. Emmanuel Elmadjian was also an indefatigable musician, very active on the Lebanese musical scene. Among the choirmasters covered in this text, he is the only one who also was a wonderful singer. Between 1930, and 1960, as a very famous tenor, he participated as a soloist in all the major Armenian and local choirs in Beirut. From 1960, till the beginning of the civil war in 1975, he also conducted several choirs.

Elmadjian was born in *Marash* in 1914, into a music-loving family. Following the deportations, the Elmadjian family settled in Aleppo, where he received his elementary education in Aleppo College, but *before learning the alphabet, he learned to read the musical notes*, as he said in his interview. At

age 10, he became the soprano soloist of Levon Levonian's student choir. Along with his studies, he took violin lessons with Hagop Nalbandian. He moved to Beirut in 1930, and studied in the *Broummana* High School, where he formed his first choir. In 1932, he enrolled at the AUB, where he attracted President Dodge's attention while singing during a student concert. He earned a three-year full scholarship to study music at the university's Music Institute.<sup>45</sup> When both his parents passed away in 1934, he was obliged to leave the Institute. To earn a living, he formed a light orchestral ensemble, in which he used to sing and play during the summer vacations in the best hotels of *Bois de Boulogne* so as to continue his education at the state-supported French University's Department of Dentistry, from where he graduated as a dental surgeon in 1937. In 1938, Elmadjian returned to the AUB Music Institute and studied there for four years under Karnaoukoff, the famous Russian Baritone. In 1942, he earned a BA in music and singing.

For 25 years, Elmadjian was the tenor soloist of Ganatchian's *Koussan* Choir. He also received private lessons from Ganatchian, who infused an Armenian element in his musical education. After Ganatchian lost his eyesight, Elmadjian conducted *Koussan* for two years. The wide range of his voice allowed Elmadjian to sing tenor and baritone parts equally well. For 17 years, he was the soloist of the Choral Society of the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts, under the leadership of Alexis Boutros. *The tenor, Dr. Elmadjian, in the performances of Handel's Messiah and Beethoven's Missa Solemnis proved an outstanding talent and his gifted voice is an asset for the Society*, wrote the newspaper *Hayrenik* (Boston) in 1946.<sup>46</sup>

In Elmadjian's conducting career, the years 1962-1966, were most fruitful. He simultaneously conducted several choirs, such as the AYA Song & Dance Group, the *Baalbeck* Festival's opera choir, and the 125-member Armenian Folk Song & Dance Ensemble, composed of the AYA *Antranig* and the *Hamazkayin Kenar* groups. In 1966, this ensemble made a 10-day triumphant tour to Lisbon, at the invitation of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

## Conclusion

All these conductors and their choirs deserve praise for the admirable quality of their work during the difficult times they lived in. Thanks to their supreme efforts, will and courage, the legacy of Armenian songs was proudly

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<sup>45</sup> I obtained this information from him during my interview on March 2, 1982.

<sup>46</sup> *Hayrenik*, Boston, October, 1946 (from the memorial concert's booklet March 1987, Beirut p. 18).

carried from one generation to the other, new songs were composed, and Armenian songs were made known to non-Armenians.

In spite of the devastating civil war (1975-1990), and the unstable political situation of Lebanon since the end of the war, the tradition continues. The existing Lebanese-Armenian choirs in Beirut are: *Hamazkayin's Gargatch*, the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East *Armiss* choir, Catholic Patriarchate's *Groung*, Cilicia Catholicosate's *Shnorhali*, and *Hamazkayin's* Anjar branch's *Gomidas* choir.

*Hamazkayin's Gargatch* choir is children's and junior youth choir sponsored by the *Hamazkayin* Armenian Educational and Cultural Society. Established in 1997, by Zakar Keshishian, its founding artistic director and conductor - a graduate of Gomidas State Conservatory in Yerevan, *Gargatch* has been performing for its ninth consecutive year. To date, *Gargatch* has performed over 100 songs some of which are written and composed by poets and composers in Armenia such as, Robert Bedrossian and Armenouhi Garabedian, and in Lebanon, songs by Zaki Nasif and Toufik Succar. Its repertoire is multi-lingual, classical and contemporary. The *Gargatch* choir is composed of 117 members.

The Armenian Evangelical *Armiss* choir, sponsored by the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches, was established in 1981. Its founding conductor was Vatche Barsoumian, a graduate of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ, and the present director of the Lark Musical Society in Glendale, California. In 1987, Rev. Nerses Balabanian, a graduate of Kansas-Wesleyan and Southern Methodist Universities in Music and Theology, reestablished the *Armiss* choir. During the war years, the group scheduled two performances but was unable to achieve. May 2001, signaled the choir's rebirth under the leadership of Rev. Balabanian. The choir gave a sacred music concert at the AUB Assembly Hall to commemorate the 1,700 anniversary of Christian Armenia. Since then, the 70-member *Armiss* choir performs regularly sacred and secular Armenian and European pieces.

The Armenian Catholic Patriarch, Jean Pierre XVIII, established the *Groung* choir in January, 1992, under the leadership of Edward Torikian, a graduate of Université Saint Esprit de Kaslik (Doctorate in Musicology in 2004), presently the director of the Der Minassian Music Center, Saint Cross, *Zalka*. *Groung* gave its first choir concert in 1993, and since then it has been performing regularly in Beirut, Egypt, Syria, and Rome. In 1999, *Groung's* first compact disk of sacred songs was released.

The *Shnorhali* choir of the Great House of Cilicia Catholicosate was established in 1973, the year of Saint Nerses *Shnorhali*'s 800th anniversary of his death. Kevork Kandaharian and Archbishop Zareh Aznavorian were the founding leader-conductors. In 2003, the *Shnorhali* choir's 30th anniversary was celebrated under the leadership of Father Barteve Gulumian. Currently, the choir's artistic director is maestro Zakar Keshishian. The choir takes part throughout the regular Sunday Mass and gives annual concerts with secular and sacred programs.

The *Gomidás* choir of *Hamazkayin's Anjar* branch was established in 1971, in *Anjar*. In 1990, Barkev Taslakian, a student of Haroutioun Topikian and Professor Yervant Yerganian at the Parsegh Ganatchian Conservatory in Beirut, took the leadership of the choir. This choir performed only in *Anjar* till 1997; after which it started performing in the various villages of the *Bekaa* Valley singing Armenian songs. In 2001, the choir performed in Armenia during the 1,700th anniversary celebrations. The *Gomidás* choir has toured Syria, Cyprus, Turkey and Armenia. In 2001, the choir won the first prize in best choir competition in Lebanon. The choir performs *a capella* following Parsegh Ganatchian's tradition. In 2003, Barkev Taslakian was invited to Tripoli, where he formed the *Fayha* choir composed of Christian and Muslim choristers. In November 2005, Barkev Taslakian's *Fayha* choir participated in the Warsaw International Choir Festival competition and won the second prize. This choir's repertoire consists of *Gomidás*, *Ganatchian* and Arabic popular songs.

## Résumé

### **Les choeurs arméniens au Liban de 1930 à 1980 : un pont entre le passé et le présent**

Après le génocide et l'arrivée des Arméniens au Liban dans les années 1920, chanter dans les choeurs devint une activité artistique précoce dans la communauté arménienne.

Ce chapitre est consacré aux six chefs d'orchestre actifs à Beyrouth, entre les années 1930 et 1980 ; il s'agit, par ordre chronologique, de Hagop Uvezian, Parsegh Ganatchian, Hampartzoum Berberian, Dikran Kassouny, Ashod Badmakrian, et Emmanuel Elmadjian.

Avec leurs choeurs, ils ont largement contribué à la survie culturelle des Arméniens durant les étapes formatives de la communauté au Liban.

Chanter dans un choeur – venant s'ajouter au rôle des écoles - était perçu et vécu comme une des pierres angulaires de l'oeuvre de préservation de la culture arménienne. Coupés de leur patrie, les Arméniens sentaient le besoin de constituer des choeurs pour des raisons patriotiques et pour faire revivre leurs traditions ; la chanson semble avoir été la meilleure manière de retrouver l'identité arménienne dans les pays adoptifs. La littérature démontre d'ailleurs qu'il y a une relation assez étroite entre le deuil et la créativité.

De nombreux réfugiés arméniens s'établirent à Beyrouth et dans ses banlieues ; très vite ils commencèrent à bâtir des églises, des écoles, et à fonder des organisations culturelles.

Nous évaluons dans les lignes qui suivent le rôle joué par ces choeurs dans la vie des Arméniens de Beyrouth ; ces maîtres de chapelle qui avaient commencé leurs carrières musicales dans leur pays d'origine, continuent à créer à Beyrouth et tissent ainsi un lien entre l'ancien héritage musical des chansons arméniennes, méconnu par les masses, et les nouveautés du présent.

Leur choix (ainsi que celui de leurs choeurs), est dû à la longévité de leurs carrières à Beyrouth – au moins dix ans sans interruption- et à leurs rôles dans la communauté arméno-libanaise.

La plupart des sources utilisées sont primaires ; la méthode choisie est qualitative. Il y eut trois étapes dans la recherche menée pour ce travail : une enquête par questionnaire auprès des membres des choeurs, complétée par des entrevues personnelles, et par le dépouillement des journaux arméniens de l'époque.