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ART

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ONE AND INSEPARABLE ARMENIAN NATION, ONE AND INSEPARABLE ARMENIAN CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

In 1967, the Constantinople Armenians in Montreal established the Expatriates' Union. Free from all kinds of political, religious, and party affiliations, it stands out as the most liberal and devoted advocate of the Armenian traditions. Since 1969, the Union of Constantinople Armenians has owned its own theatre hall, dedicated to hosting performances in Armenian. The inaugural cultural event took place on April 12, 1969, quickly gaining popularity among Armenians in Montreal. Since the early days of the Union, former graduates of Mkhitarian, Esayan, and Kedronakan Colleges have been actively engaged in the cultural committee, working for the benefit of the nation. Through their dedication and initiative, the cultural body "MEK" of the Union of Constantinople Armenians was established in 1973, named after the initials of the schools. The MEK cultural body operates under the slogan "MEK and inseparable Armenian nation, MEK and inseparable culture".

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The Union of Constantinople Armenians has been active for more than fifty years, remaining dedicated to its mission: "to serve the unified Armenian nation and its culture."

Introduction

The Patriotic Union of Constantinople Armenians was established in 1967 through the efforts of Constantinople Armenians who had settled in Montreal. It is the only patriotic union operating in Canada, free from all kinds of political, religious, and party currents, but at the same time the most liberal, as well as an apologist and devoted defender of Armenian traditions. On those distant shores, the Union of Constantinople Armenians (UCA) is a canopy warmed by and warming with Armenian spirit, designed to fatherly shelter Armenian "splinters." It is a union where compatriots gather, freeing themselves from everyday worries and awakening their accumulated memories of the past. Finally, it is a gathering place for the Armenians of Constantinople, where social, cultural, sports, youth and other events are organized.

The Patriotic Union of Constantinople Armenians

Since the early days of its formation, the UCA has adopted the following principle, as its main and unwavering goal: to cooperate with all Canadian Armenian organizations, as well as to become a bridge between the various and sometimes competing associations of the Armenian Diaspora in Canada. Even the large-scale pictures of more than twenty merited Armenians (regardless of their party affiliation), decorating the UCA hall, and the slogan of the Union written in calligraphic letters on the top of the stage: "We are brothers," bear witness to this fact.¹

Like all the Armenian organizations in Montreal, the main goal of the UCA is to preserve the Armenian spirit on foreign shores, to introduce our culture to the foreigners, to teach the native language to our compatriots who due to circumstances did not have the opportunity to learn it at the time, and thereby become a barrier against assimilation.

In 1969, the Union had just constructed its own centre, in the theatre hall of which the first UCA artistic evening was held on April 12 of the same year. It lasted

¹ «Քուլիս» 1979, № 79, 8.

One and Inseparable Armenian Nation, one and Inseparable Armenian Culture

for three and a half hours, and as it became known from the press,² the program included solo songs, and solo dances, recitals, piano pieces, a concert by a choir of thirty people (under the direction of Gegham Shirvanian), and two hilarious comedies. The evening generated great enthusiasm among the audience.

However, the first full theatrical performance was given in the UCA newly built hall during a party held on May 10, 1969. That evening was organized much more successfully and flawlessly than the first artistic evening on April 12, despite certain understandable and inevitable drawbacks. That day featured *Oh, this Grandma of Mine*, a three-act comedy by Ferdinand Roger,³ the Armenian version of which was prepared by Constantinople Armenian film director and actor Arshavir Alyanakian.⁴ The play was staged by gifted actor Nubar Fntkian; owing to his efforts and hard work, also the excellent performance of all the actors, the play was highly appreciated by the audience, as the press reported.⁵

The brief plot of the comedy is as follows. To extort money from his rich grandmother, lawyer Vahé pretends to be married, to have a child and to have invited his father-in-law to his home. However, unexpectedly, Vahé's grandmother comes to visit him with her goddaughter, beautiful Shushan. Vahé's servant Minas saves the situation: he gives Vahé his child; his friend, actor Hrach, takes on the role of Vahé's wife, and Vahé's defendant Tokmak Poghos plays Vahé's father-in-law. Eventually, the truth is revealed, but all ends well: Vahé marries Shushan, whom he has long loved. The performance, which lasted about two hours, gave the audience great pleasure and many amusing moments. Mkrtich Tsaturian (Minas) was the central figure of the play, who gave the audience many funny and unforgettable moments with his flawless acting, both in his mimicry, impressive speech and movements. The other actors also played naturally and successfully: Gegham Shirvanian (Vahé), Mihran Chakeravjian (Tokmak Poghos), Nubar Fyntkian (Hrach), Iskuhi Hovnanian (Grandmother), Paytsar Hyur (fiancée of Hrach), Arpi Kult (Shushan), Garegin Odabashian (doctor), Anna Pehlivanian (wife of Minas).

² «Քուրաստան» 1969, № 67, 27, «Քուլիս» 1969, № 546, 13.

³ Roger Ferdinand (1898–1967) French playwright and screenwriter.

⁴ Alyanakian (Alyanak), Arshavir, film director and actor. Lived and worked in Constantinople. By the way, A. Alyanakian played a significant role in the development of Turkish cinematography as well. The films *Gyulnaz* and *Leyla's Sin* were shot under his direction and with his participation, in which several Armenian actors also took part.

⁵ «Հայրենիք» 1969, մայիս 24:

At the same time, the press notes that the translation of the comedy contained unnecessary and impure Armenian expressions, explanations, and exclamations in Turkish, which did not add anything new to the funny content of the comedy⁶.

Such undertakings have fostered the appearance and development of many new actors with a theatrical gift, as well as provided opportunities for talented and promising actors from the Montreal community to perform together. As "Hayrenik" daily notes, this entirely proceeded from the goals and aspirations of the UCA: "Cooperation and collective efforts,- here is the motto that various organizations should strive for"⁷.

The following year, on January 17, 1970, on the initiative of the UCA cultural body, "Premature" (also known as "The Street Girl," and "The Underage"), a three-act comedy by the Italian playwright Dario Niccodemi⁸, was staged. The heroine of the comedy is an underage, beautiful girl, who grows up unattended and illiterate; she distances herself from the narrow-minded false morals and customs, and preserves childlike naivety in everything. Due to these qualities and natural beauty, everybody loves her; however, none of them shows her sincere love and serious plans to create a family. That is why such emotions as love, jealousy, contempt, rejection, and revenge appear and mix in her simple and pure soul, which multiply the number of those who pursue her on the one hand, and on the other hand, the number of women, filled with revenge. The play was staged by gifted actress A. Guyumjian,⁹ who also played the main role, trying to present

⁶ «Հայրենիք» 1969, մայիս 24:

⁷ «Հայրենիք» 1969, մայիս 24:

⁸ Niccodemi, Dario (1874–1934), Italian playwright. He spent his childhood and adolescence in Buenos Aires. He wrote his first plays in Spanish. At the beginning of the World War I, he moved to Italy and settled in Milan. He was one of those Italian playwrights, whose plays were frequently included in theatre repertoires.

⁹ Actress Anahit Guyumjian (1938–2020) was born in the family of an artist in Istanbul. Since her childhood, she performed various roles in the shows and performances, organized at different schools. She graduated from the local Conservatory. At the age of fifteen, she made her debut with adults in the play *Premature*, staged by Ashot Madatian. She moved to Canada in October 1967. She played in the performances, organized by the Union of Constantinople Armenians in Montreal: *The Honourable Beggars*, *The Flatterer*, *La Petite Chocolatière*, *Premature*, *Anush* opera, *The Princess of the Fallen Fortress* of the "Petros Adamian" Theatre Group of the Armenian All-National Cultural Union, *The Egoist*, *Shotar and the Family*, *The World*, *Yes*, *Turned Upside Down*, *The Crane Calls* and other performanc-

One and Inseparable Armenian Nation, one and Inseparable Armenian Culture

the complex state of mind of her heroine to the audience, and showing a deeply tragic life under the comic. Mrs. Mailyk (Franca), Nubar Fntkian (Titus), Mihran Chakeravjian (Auguste), Gegham Shirvanian (Jules), Habet Mailyk (Emil), Nikoghos Tompakjian (Faustus) played the other roles. According to the Canadian Armenian press, the harmonious performance, played in the UCA hall, was attended by a large number of people¹⁰.

On June 13 of that year, the four-act comedy *La Petite Chocolatière* by Paul Gavault was presented under the direction of Anahit Guyumjian: it was translated into Armenian by the famous Constantinople Armenian actor and director Ashot Madatian (1882–1965). Besides Anahit Guyumjian, Arakel Gompyrkian, Irma Merakian, Araxi Oskanian, Herman Jehennemian, Vordik Miraseti, Mari Ohanian, Mihran Avjian (Chakeravjian), Grigor Merakian, Nikoghos Tompakjian performed roles¹¹. Although many of the actors were on stage for the first time, under the leadership of Anahit Guyumjian, a tireless devotee of Armenian culture, they did their best to show their full potential and present the public a performance, endowed with a high acting level. And they really managed to do so. The performance was very warmly received and encouraged by the public. The actors repeated it with great enthusiasm and delight on June 20¹².

On January 31, 1971, in the UCA hall, two small but interesting performances were given under the direction of G. Shirvanian: *The Lighthouse Keepers*, and the *Two Deaf People* by Molière. In the first performance, the roles were played by experienced actor Gegham Simonian and Kedronakan College graduate Herman Jehennemian, who, having no rich experience of acting, best embodied the complicated feelings of his character¹³.

Grigor Merakian (deaf father), Lulu Aznavour (daughter), Herman Jehennemian (Bonifas), Vordik Miraseti (servant) played in the second performance. Although many spectators had heard, seen and read these works many times, they seemed to be watching the performances for the first time and often interrupted them with laughter, excitement, and applause. The reason for

es; she also played the main role in the comedy *Baghdasar Aghbar*, staged by Mher Mkrtchian. She performed on tour in Toronto, Boston, New Jersey, and Philadelphia.

¹⁰ «Բուրաստան», 1970, № 77, 13:

¹¹ «Բուրաստան» 1970, № 82, 11.

¹² «Բուրաստան» 1970, № 82, 11.

¹³ «Գեղարդ», 1971, № 7, 27.

the warm reception of those plays was (according to the UCA "Geghard" magazine) that "the play containing some wise judgements, which took away so much applause and laughter, probably owed to the actors' flexibility. All the actors and actresses embodied their personages well"¹⁴.

It should be noted that the theatre group of the UCA cultural body gained a great fame among the Armenians of Montreal in a short period of time. Firstly, it was the result of the work of Anahit Guyumjian, the head of the theatre company. Due to her innate artistic talent and hard work, she managed to surround herself with a lot of like-minded people who spared no effort and energy for the nation-preserving work in Montreal, regularly organizing performances in Armenian.

The first performance in the current year's rich program of the theatre group of the cultural body in the UCA hall on May 28, 1972, bears witness to the fact that Anahit Guyumjian enjoyed great reputation in the Armenian community of Montreal. "A stifling heat began in Canada, but there was no fear of seeing the hall empty because of Mrs. Anahit Guyumjian-Voskerchian, the stage director and at the same time an important actress. The exceptional abilities of the gifted Armenian woman had been the talk of the city for months"¹⁵.

That day, *The Flatterer*, a play by H. Paronian, was presented. When choosing the performers for the play, A. Guyumjian focused her main attention on the young "wishing to inspire them to love and cherish the great and splendid Armenian culture"¹⁶. Coach of the UCA football team "Ararat" Vordik Miraseti (Tadé), Murad Khachikian (Arshak), Gegham Shirvanian (Bartem), Gevorg Ayvastian (Papik, the Flatterer), Grigor Merakian (Hovsep), Sella Yaltzjian (Sophie). Arman Sevke (Tigran), and Levon Garanfil (Gevorg) played the roles. Anahit Guyumjian herself played the role of Tereza, Tadé's sister. The UCA hall was full of theatre-going public. The performance was a great success, with the audience following it with great delight, "kindling their appetites for the great spiritual food on offer"¹⁷. Guyumjian was particularly well received. According to eyewitnesses, when "the heroine of the performance enters, the hall resounds, and it becomes impossible to hear the dear and honourable representative of the

¹⁴ «Գեղարդ», 1971, № 7, 27.

¹⁵ «Գեղարդ» 1972, № 12, 26.

¹⁶ «Գեղարդ» 1972, № 12, 26.

¹⁷ «Քույիս» 1972, № 612, 22.

One and Inseparable Armenian Nation, one and Inseparable Armenian Culture

artistic parents, the decent Armenian woman who is the subject of admiration in the community for her sweet personality, Mrs. Anahit Guyumjian”¹⁸.

The young promising actor Gevorg Ayvatsyan in the role of Papik, the Flatterer, was very successful as well, in whose soul, as Istanbul magazine the “Kulis” noted, “Despite her busy schedule, Mrs. Anahit Guyumjian managed to sculpt all the nuances of art with great patience and dexterity”¹⁹ and who “fascinated the audience for exactly two hours, deserving everybody’s congratulations, without exception”²⁰.

Gegham Shirvanian and Levon Sapunjian significantly contributed to the success of the performance as well. Besides embodying the character of Bartem, which caused great enthusiasm and applause in the hall, the former also worked as a prop master, and made various things and objects, related to the external design of the performance, while the latter did the make-up of the performers with great conscientiousness and taste.

Inseparable Armenian Nation MEK and Inseparable Culture

Since the early days of the UCA, former graduates of Mkhitarian, Esayan and Kedronakan Colleges have tirelessly worked for the benefit of the nation in its cultural committee. Through their efforts and initiative, the cultural body MEK UCA was established in 1973, named so by the Chairman of the Board of the Union Jirayr Ayvatsyan with the initials of the above-mentioned schools. MEK cultural body has the “Mnakian” theatre troupe,²¹ which carried out irregular, but nevertheless lively and remarkable theatre activities in the Canadian Armenian community. The MEK cultural body operates under the slogan “MEK and inseparable Armenian nation, MEK and inseparable culture,” cooperating indiscriminately with all Armenian organizations and associations, treating their critics according to the words of the chairman of the MEK cultural body, chemist Gabriel Basmajian, “let us allow them to speak, let them allow us to act...”²².

On April 4, 1976, on the UCA initiative, U. Hajibekov's operetta *If Not This One, That One*, directed by musicologist Yervand Aleksanian and staged by singer

¹⁸ «Քուլիս» 1972, № 612, 22.

¹⁹ «Քուլիս» 1972, № 612, 22.

²⁰ «Քուլիս» 1972, № 612, 22.

²¹ «Քուլիս» 1979, № 774, 10.

²² «Գեղարդ» 1977, № 41, 13.

Bekaryan A.

Selma Keklikian, was presented on the stage of Outremont High School. "Whenever these names appear in a theatrical performance, success can be considered partially secured,- we learn from the Armenian Diaspora press, - because they have a professional reputation in Armenian and foreign circles"²³.

Now let us divert a little from our material and talk about Yervand Alexanian's activities in the pre-Montreal period²⁴.

Conductor Yervand Aleksanian (1908–1981) was born in Alexandria. He received his primary education at the local Poghosian National College. Endowed with musical abilities, he showed love for music from a young age and performed with foreign orchestras at the age of 17. In 1926, a string orchestra was organized in the "Harajdimaser"²⁵ (Progressive) club of the Armenian Youth Union (later joined by a choir), presenting mainly Armenian folk songs and music to the Armenian and foreign society. Later, Yervand Aleksanian improved his musical abilities through private lessons with musicologist Frabucini, learning composition and instrumentation.

Extending and developing, the aforementioned choir-orchestra later bore the name "Knar" (Lyre) choir-orchestra of the All-Armenian National Cultural Union. It graciously gave many charity concerts for the benefit of Armenian cultural associations and schools.

In 1940, Aleksanian moved to Cairo, where he also organized the Hamazkayin "Knar" choir, and in 1945–1946, the choir-orchestra. He appeared in many concerts, always performing Armenian folk songs and music, and always receiving a warm welcome and high praise from the people. In 1953, the talented conductor moved to Cyprus, where he organized a number of remarkable concerts. Soon, he returned to Cairo again, reorganized his choir, and continued his musical activity there until 1964.

In 1964, the conductor finally settled in Montreal, where he again organized the Hamazkayin choir, naming it "Knar."The choir gave concerts in Montreal, Toronto, Boston, and New York. The Canadian press praised the activities of the

²³ «Քնիփ» 1976, № 712, 4.

²⁴ We gathered information about Yervand Aleksanyan's activities in that period from A. Yapujian's work *History of Egyptian-Armenian Culture* (Cairo 1981, pp. 285–287) and "Horizon" Weekly issues of April 11 and May 11, 1981.

²⁵ "Harajdimaser" (Progressive) Youth Club was organized in Alexandria, in April 1916.

One and Inseparable Armenian Nation, one and Inseparable Armenian Culture

"Knar" choir as well. Thus, on July 7, 1966, the English newspaper "Gazette" wrote: "Montreal has music groups that are sometimes unknown to the public".

A truly wonderful folk choir and orchestra of seventy members, composed of members of Armenian Saint Jacob Church in Montreal, is directed by Yervand Aleksanian.

Yervand Bastrmajian, the president of the Armenian Congress of Canada, says that this proficient conductor, who has been here for barely two years, is from a family of musicologists.

They (Armenians) have very beautiful songs, and this choir presents them in a pleasant way"²⁶.

During the opening ceremony of the Expo-67 International Exhibition, organized in Montreal in 1967, it was Hamazkayin "Knar" choir that introduced the Armenian song to foreigners for the first time in Montreal. Completing our brief information on the distinguished conductor Y. Aleksanian, we should note that along with his long-term activity beneficial to the nation and preserving the Armenian identity, he created and developed many songs, as well as made arrangements of Armenian and foreign musical works. We should also add that in 1976, a record of the concert, held on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Aleksanian's musical activity, was issued.

Now, let us go back to the operetta *If Not This One, That One* performance. As the "Kulis" theatre reviewer points out, "The main condition for the success of an operetta is the vocal ability of the actors to satisfactorily perform the songs. Considering the difficult (almost unrealizable) conditions of the Diaspora, it takes a lot of work to find and bring together singing actors, and with the tireless efforts of Aleksanian and Keklikian, the performance of the operetta *If Not This One, That One* was a success, and received the warm appreciation of the public"²⁷. Arto Nshanian embodied the main character of the operetta Mashti Bad, "the tireless and dedicated servant of the Armenian stage for many years," who "this time, as always, was deeply in control of his role and presented the character he embodied to the people in a flawless performance"²⁸.

Galustian National College graduate Arto Nshanian, was born in Cairo, in 1933. He was fascinated by theatre from a young age. "In 1939, during the war

²⁶ "Gazette," "About Knar", «Հորիզոն» 1981, 11, 04

²⁷ «Քուլիս» 1976, № 712, 4:

²⁸ «Քուլիս» 1976, № 712, 4:

Bekaryan A.

years," Arto Nshanian recalls, "Arpiar Vardian²⁹ organized outdoor performances. We would go to attend three hours before and often got kicked out"³⁰. He first appeared on stage at the age of 16, playing the role of Garnik Agha in *Charshyly Artin Agha*, a comedy by Yervand Otian and Mikael Gyurjian. He played in Cairo's Hamazkayin, Unions of Armenian Art Lovers and Book-Lovers, as well as individual theatre groups of Araxi Ohanian,³¹ Arpiar Vardian, Sedi Gochunian³². In that period, Nshanian preferred to play in operetta and historical performances: *Better Late Than Never*, *Sayat-Nova*, *Vardanank*, *Duran Duran*, *Sonya*, etc., in which he played the leading roles³³. In 1963, settling in Canada, A. Nshanian was assigned choirmaster of the church of St. Hakob in Montreal. Then, for the church fund, together with some enthusiastic young people, they staged *If Not This One, That One* (G. Yeritsian), the first operetta performance in Armenian in

²⁹ Vardian, Arpiar (1898–1978), a famous Diaspora Armenian actor and director. After the World War I, he moved from Istanbul to Egypt, where he organized his own theater troupe and gave many performances (all of them comedies) in Cairo, Alexandria and other cities, where many Armenians lived. In the 1960s, he finally settled in Montreal, where he continued his theatre activities. In particular, he staged *Charlie's Godmother*, *Mrs. Monkote*, *Return My Wife*, *Uncle Karapet from Samatia*, *Arshin Mal Alan*, *Roses of Caesarea*, *Duran Duran* and other plays.

³⁰ «Քնիլի» 1978, № 760, 10–11.

³¹ Ohanian, Araxi (Vardian, 1911–1981), Diaspora Armenian actress. Her parents were victims of the Genocide. In 1918, owing to charitable organizations, she was saved and placed in an orphanage in Arnaut village. In 1922, together with the orphanage, she moved to Greece, and in 1924, she was adopted by an Egyptian-Armenian family. She appeared on stage for the first time in Cairo in 1927, playing the role of Sophie in *The Flatterer* by H. Paronian. Later, for more than forty years, she acted in more than four hundred plays, many of which she translated or turned into plays herself. She also wrote comedies and dramas (*Hars Khatun*, *Sayat-Nova*, *Rozik*, *The Innocent Sinner*, *The Betrothed*, *The Irony of Life*, *The Victim of an Invention*, *Malviné*, *A Girl or a Boy, or the Maiden Mother*, etc.). She also participated in the performances of Greek, Arab and Turkish theatre groups. Endowed with a beautiful voice, in 1934, she first introduced Armenian songs to Egyptian radio listeners.

³² Gochunyan, Sedi (born in Cairo, in 1927), Diaspora Armenian actor. He made his first artistic steps in English, participating in English school and "Green Room" theatre groups. From 1947, he played on the Egyptian-Armenian stage. From 1951, he was also engaged in staging activity; he staged *Criminal's Family* (*La Morte Civile*) by P. Giacometti, *Honourable Beggars* by H. Paronian, etc. He appeared in a number of Egyptian and American films. Later, he settled in Australia, where he continued his theatrical and literary activities as well.

³³ «Քնիլի» 1978, № 760, 11.

One and Inseparable Armenian Nation, one and Inseparable Armenian Culture

Montreal, as well as other plays, and then they were invited to play in Boston, where they repeated the performances, staged in Montreal.

In the above-mentioned performance *If Not This One, That One*, Nora Antonian, playing the role of Gyulnaz, captivated the audience with her beautiful voice and gifted acting. Arthur Abgarian in the role of enamoured Sarvar also deeply impressed the audience with the best performance of the song, and his convincing and attractive play. The role of Gyulnaz's father, the second elderly protagonist of the play, was taken by the tireless and active member of the UCA, Dr. Sargis Sandikian, who also managed to truthfully embody the image of his hero. According to an eyewitness, "contrary to his young age, he played the role of an old father naturally and skillfully, convincing us of the painful seconds of the compulsion of a materially spoiled man to save his existence by cunning means"³⁴.

Ashkhen Hatsagortsian, as the maid of Gyulnaz, skillfully embodied the image of a clever and cunning woman, who is a faithful defender of Gyulnaz. H. Gataroyan, H. Pahlav, brothers V. and G. Hakobians, and J. Garakyozyan, distinguished for their natural and sincere acting, brought great pleasure to the audience with their cheerful and funny songs.

Let us note once again that Y. Aleksanian and his orchestra, director S. Keklikyan, as well as the UCA dance group, led by Petros Davtian, significantly contributed to the success of this performance. Particularly interesting was its enthusiastic finale with a magnificent wedding scene.

In April 1982, the celebrations, dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the UCA "Geghard" magazine, were completed with a theatre performance, consisting of fragments from various plays, which were presented by the multi-merited artist and actor Davit Evereklian under the name of "Taterapunj" (Theatrical Bouquet).

Talented actor, gifted director, theatrical figure, and founder of theatre groups D. Evereklian (born in Beirut, in 1927) entered the world of theatre in the Lebanon, in 1943. For forty long years, without raising a fuss, he served the Armenian theatre with incredible modesty and boundless dedication by acting, staging, founding theatre groups, writing theatre reports and articles, participating in the performances of local and visiting theatre groups. D. Evereklian participated in the works of the "Rouben Mamoulian" theatre group (1943–1945), founded by Gevorg Baghjian (Vazgen Ayguni). He is one of the

³⁴ «Քննիչ» 1976, № 712, 5.

founders and dedicated figures of the “Lebanese Armenian” (1946–1954), “Petros Adamian” (1953–1957), “Kulisakan” (1961–1966) theatre groups,³⁵ as well as the witness of the fruitful and vigorous activity of many theatre groups and actors, a truthful witness and chronologist D. Evereklian published *Tateragir*, a theatre booklet, which featured famous Diaspora Armenian actors B. Abovian,³⁶ A. Madatian,³⁷ M. Marutyan,³⁸ Ed. Chaprast,³⁹ T. Ajemian,⁴⁰ P. Mendilian,⁴¹ J.

³⁵ «Գեղարդ» 1982, № 58, 15:

³⁶ Abovian, Barsegh (1880–1959), born in Tiflis. Before the World War I, he played in many Armenian theatre groups operating in the Caucasus, then he went to Persia, and after the war to Syria, the Lebanon, and Egypt. In the end, he settled in Syria, where he had a long-term stage activity. Among the favorite roles were: Elizbarov (*For Honour*), Barkhudar and Rustam (*Namus*), Suleiman Khan (*Betrayal*), Franz and Carl Moore (*The Robbers*), Abbot (*Old Gods*), Crazy Daniel (*Evil Spirit*) and others.

³⁷ Madatian, Ashot (Madatians, 1882–1965), born in Tehran. Before the First World War, he played with H. Zarifian, Siranuys, V. Papazian, Ed. Chaprast, N. Peshiktashlian, Felekian sisters and others. In 1918, he organized “Melpomene” theatre group in Aleppo, and later, he moved to “Dramatic” theatre group in Constantinople. Then he continued his theatrical and literary activities in Beirut and Constantinople.

³⁸ Marutian Manvel (1901–1986), born in Van. He attended the courses at the Dramatic Academy in Vienna, after that he formed a theatre group and toured the Armenian cities of the Diaspora, with the plays of Shakespeare, Shant, Shirvanzadé and Paronian, in which he took the main roles. He also wrote plays (*From the Darkness*, *The Red Sultan*, *Komitas*, *The Actor's Dream*, etc.). Later, he settled and worked in Iran, where he participated in the shooting of some films.

³⁹ Chaprast, Eduard (Chaprastjian, 1891–1974), Armenian actor, playwright and memoirist. He was born in Constantinople (Istanbul), and from the age of six, he appeared on stage in the “Mnakyen” theatre troupe, where his father played. After the World War I, with the support of Ashot Madatian, Tigran Poghos, Mkrtich Janan, Hrachya Nersisian, Trdat Nshanyan, and Gevorg Garvarents, he managed to gather 25–30 theatre-going young people and found the “Constantinople Armenians’ Dramatic” theatre group. Ed. Chaprast was one of the unique Armenian theatre figures who had been in almost all Armenian cultural centres: Constantinople, Armenia, the Caucasus, Russia, Persia, Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, the Lebanon, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, France, America, and elsewhere. He is the author of a number of historical plays (*Tigran II*, *Queen Parandzem*, *Hayk Nahapet*, etc.).

⁴⁰ Ajemian, Tiran (1902–1991), cartoonist, and actor, born in Aleppo. In 1919, he played in the “Constantinople Armenian Dramatic” theatre group. In 1921, he organized a theatre troupe in Aleppo and staged *The Perished* by Shirvanzadé, *On the Ruins*, *For Honour*, *Namus*, *Old Gods* by Shant and other plays, in which he took the leading roles. From 1923, he played with H. Abelian, B. Abovian and Kostanian theatre groups, where he also performed the main roles. Later, he left the stage and fully devoted himself to painting.

One and Inseparable Armenian Nation, one and Inseparable Armenian Culture

Sargisian,⁴² as well as great Armenian actors V. Papazian, G. Janibekian, A. Avetisian and others. However, unfortunately, D. Evereklian's prolific and productive career in the Lebanon was interrupted due to the country's unstable and unfavourable political conditions, and in 1975, with his family, along with many others, he left the Lebanon and settled in Montreal. Here, he recreated his theatrical milieu as well. Owing to his easy-going, gentle and modest character, he found close friends in the UCA as well and soon became the secretary of the MEK cultural body.

The repertoire presented by D. Evereklian contained excerpts from eight plays, which were performed individually many times in the Armenian communities of various countries and had already received high praise from the Armenian theatre-going public.

D. Evereklian was concerned about whether he would be able to overcome all the difficulties and properly present the individual parts of the plays to the audience. As G. Shirvanian noted in "Geghard" magazine in 1982, № 56, D. Evereklian's play was a significant success: *The Valley of Tear* by A. Aharonian, *One of the Many* by Hakob Ayvaz, *The World's Judgment* by Aleksandrovich, *The Game of Heroes* by M. Gjurjian and E. Otyan, *The District Chief* by Dr. G. Baghjian, *The In-Laws* by Eugène Labiche, *Madman No. 5* by Mihrdad Haykaz, and *The Daughter-in-Law and the Mother-in-Law* by Graham Simon, all of them are the jewels of our stage, which due to the efforts of D. Evereklian once again defiled the modest and small stages of the UCA, and won the hearts of everyone⁴³. The selected pieces of music also contributed to the success of the performance, made the scenes more vivid, meaningful and convincing, and the audience easily moved into the milieu of the events under the influence of the

⁴¹ Mendilian, Poghos (born in Kyurin, Turkey, in 1904). He received his primary education at a local school. In 1920, he settled in the Lebanon, where he carried out a long and fruitful theatrical activity.

⁴² Sargisian, George (1915–1982), Armenian actor, director and translator, born in Kharberd. He had a great contribution to the theatre life of the Lebanese Armenians. He was one of the founders of the "Gaspar Ipekian" theater group of the All-National Cultural Union in Beirut. He performed on tours in Iran, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Cyprus, USA, Canada, Argentina, and Brazil. He directed more than forty plays, including *How Difficult it Is To Die!* by Moushegh Ishkhan, *Princess of the Fallen Fortress* by Shant, *The Crane Calls* by Jacques Hakobian, *The Golden Rooster* by Raffi, etc. He translated 17 plays.

⁴³ «Գեղարդ» 1982, № 58, 16.

music, becoming a communicator of the monologue of the actors. "It was also very appropriate," G. Shirvanian said, "that the proper preludes at the beginning of each play, carefully chosen according to their meaning, conveyed the undertaking a specific shine and grandeur"⁴⁴.

The roles were performed by Rosalia Vasilian, Nerses Tolmajian, Hakob and Berkruj Evereklians, Arsho Sasunian, Jean Khanjian, who faithfully embodied the roles entrusted to them.

The UCA continues to be a beacon of brotherhood, cooperation and unity of spirit within the community, never deviating from its motto: to serve one and inseparable Armenian nation, one and indivisible culture.

Conclusion

Thus, the UCA has been active for fifty years, continuing the struggle for union, solidarity and unity. True to its sacred slogan: ONE NATION, ONE CULTURE, MEK Cultural Union strives to create ample opportunities for indiscriminate cooperation and service to our culture.

As Gevorg Baghjian rightly observes, "Today's harvest is still insufficient, but we, as good farmers, will continuously destroy the solid rocks, barrel by barrel and inch by inch, remove weeds, fertilize the virgin fields and sow them abundantly, in accordance with the Armenian culture. We are convinced that the waterless fields, seemed to be virgin today, will sprout and blossom tomorrow with swelling wheat grains and red tulips in the fields thought to be barren, and infertile"⁴⁵.

The Union of Constantinople Armenians really strives to be the torch-bearer of brotherhood, cooperation and united spirit within the community, never wavering of its motto: to serve the one and inseparable culture of the one and inseparable Armenian nation.

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⁴⁴ «Գեղարդ» 1982, № 58, 16.

⁴⁵ «Գեղարդ» 1974, № 1, 14:

One and Inseparable Armenian Nation, one and Inseparable Armenian Culture

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ԲԵՔԱՐՅԱՆ Ա.

Ամփոփում

Բանալի բառեր՝ Պոլսահայ հայրենակցական միություն, կանադահայ գաղթօջախ, մեկ ազգ, մեկ մշակույթ, թատերական ներկայացում, Անահիտ Գույումճյան, Դավիթ Էվերեկլյան:

Մոնրեալում հաստատված պոլսահայերի ջանքերով 1967-ին ստեղծվել է Պոլսահայ հայրենակցական միությունը, որը դարձել է հայկական ավանդույթների ջատագովն ու հավատարիմ պաշտպանը: 1969-ին միությունը ունեցավ իր սեփական շենք կենտրոնը, որի թատերասրահում կազմակերպվում են գեղարվեստական երեկոներ և թատերական ներկայացումներ: Պոլսահայ միությունում գործող թատերախումբը մեծ ժողովրդականություն է վայելում

Bekaryan A.

մոնրեալահայերի մոտ: Ավելի քան հիսուն տարի գործող Պոլսահայ միությունը, շարունակում է լինել գործակցության և միասնական ոգու ջահակիր:

ЕДИНЫЙ И НЕДЕЛИМЫЙ АРМЯНСКИЙ НАРОД И ЕДИНАЯ И НЕДЕЛИМАЯ АРМЯНСКАЯ КУЛЬТУРА

БЕКАРЯН А.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: Земляческий союз константинопольских армян, армянская община Канады, единая нация, единая культура, театральное представление, Анаит Гуюмджян, Давид Эвереклян.

Усилиями обосновавшихся в Монреале константинопольских армян в 1967 году был создан Земляческий союз константинопольских армян, ставший поборником и верным защитником армянских традиций.

С 1969 года Союз константинопольских армян приобрел здание, в театральном зале которого регулярно организуются художественные вечера и театральные представления на армянском языке. При Союзе константинопольских армян действует театральная труппа, пользующаяся популярностью среди монреальских армян. На протяжении более 50 лет Союз константинопольских армян играет консолидирующую роль в монреальской армянской общине, пропагандируя армянскую культуру.