

## “HOVER” CHAMBER CHOIR

**Sona Hovhannisyan**

*Artistic director and conductor*



**Komitas**  
**(1869 - 1935)**

“HOVER” (ՀՈՎԷՐ) chamber choir was founded in 1992. The choir was established on personal initiative without any sponsorship support. Right from its first appearances the choir presented an original type of Armenian choral music, open to any style and genre, closely connected with the art of European choral music. The choir gives principle importance to experiment and innovation and to the synthesis of various arts even while performing most traditional academic pieces. In 1996 “Hover” premiered Benjamin Britten's “Canticum Misericordium” with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra (conductor K. Durgaryan).

In 1996 “Hover” issued its first CD - Ludwig Basil's sacred choral songs. In 1997 the release of the CD was followed by participation of the choir in the International choral competition-festival in Arezzo (Italy) and a concert on the island of St. Lasarus, Venice. In 1996-1997 “Hover” premiered “St. John Passion” and “St. Matthew Passion” oratorios by J.S. Bach in full volume (conductor Z. Vardanyan).

In 1999 “Hover” participated in the choral competition-festival in Tours (France) becoming twice laureate of international competitions. During these years in its concerts “Hover” performed masterpieces of Purcell, Schütz, Brahms, Honegger, Poulenc, Hindemith, Britten, Stravinsky, Messiaen and other Western-European composers as well as a number of newly composed choral works by contemporary Armenian composers (A. Ghazaryan, V. Manukyan, A. Voskanyan) and works of the founders of Armenian choral art - Komitas and Yekmalyan.

During these years “Hover” presented its first staging of “Dance songs” by Komitas.

In the winter of 1999 “Hover” held a concert-performance under the name of “Christmas Carols” in combination with shadow play in the experimental theater “Being” (ԳՈՅ) (director A. Manukyan).

The year 2000 brought big success to “Hover”. The choir participated in the First World Choir Olympiad in Linz (Austria) and was awarded a Gold medal out of more than 300 choir-participants. This success was rewarded by a group of American Armenian music fans who helped “Hover” choir to realize their artistic projects. “Armenian Voices” and “Six Fables” CDs were recorded soon after.

In 2003 for the first time in the Armenian reality “Hover” appeared with an innovative genre initiative named “choral theater” by the critics. This was a choral staging of six fables by Vardan Aygektsi (music by S. Babatorosyan, director A. Manukyan). The “Six Fables” CD won the American “Music Awards” and “We're all in



this together!” prizes as “The Best Choral Performance”. “Hover” recorded monodic sharakans for VEM radio station and issued “The Way” CD album. Within the framework of the international festival “The perspectives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” “Hover” performed S. Rostomyan's symphony together with “London Sinfonietta” orchestra (conductor Diego Masson). The choir appeared with concerts in England and Scotland in collaboration with the Edinburgh choir conducted by Noel O'Reagan and hosted them in Armenia the next year, in 2004. Series of concerts in the United Kingdom ended by a concert in London dedicated to the annual anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia.

From these years on “Hover” has been participating in concert programs with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by its Principal Conductor and Artistic Director E.Topchyan performing *Requiems* by Mozart and Cherubini, *Stabat Mater* by Pergolesi, *Canticum Dolorosum* by V. Sharafian, *Missa* by Buxtehude, *Cantatas* No. 157 and No. 150 by J.S. Bach, *Stabat Mater* by Poulenc, *Missa de Lumine* by D. Haladjian, *Styx* by Giya Kancheli, *Requiem* by T. Mansourian, *Love Cantata* by R. Amirkhanyan. In various years the choir also took part in stagings and concert performances of operas: “Il Barbiere di Siviglia”, “I Pagliacci”, “Madama Butterfly”, “Eugene Onegin”, “La Cavalleria Rusticana”, “Anouche”, “Artsvaberd”, “Fire Ring”, “Tosca”.

In 2005 “Hover” participated in the performance of A.Terterian's 6th symphony in the open air concert at the Cascade monument (conductor R. Asatryan)., and as part of combined choirs “Hover” performed Mozart's “c-moll Messe” conducted by John Nelson and one year later Beethoven's “Missa Solemnis”.

In 2006, 2007 “Hover” recorded a double CD of *Armenian Divine Liturgy* by Komitas written for male voices and an album of Komitas “Folk Songs”. The CDs were released in Germany through sponsorship of the benevolent fund of the Stanford

University: "The Flora Family Foundation" within the framework of the project of preservation of national values. A great number of copies of this album was distributed free of charge to the leading spiritual centers, universities, libraries, international organizations, information resource centers and churches through *Kultur Aktiv e.V.* Starting from this period the organizational and international issues of the choir were taken up by the manager of "Hover" chamber choir, A. Padaryan. Due to his efforts the choir's recognition on the international arena has been continuously growing.

In 2006 "Hover" choir visited France to present the Armenian choral art within the framework of the days of the Armenian culture in France "Armenie Mon Amie". During this tour "Hover" collaborated with the famous "Musicatreize" vocal ensemble (conductor Roland Hayrabedian).

In 2007 the choir presented "La Petite Messe Solenelle" by Rossini with the pianist S. Navasardyan (conductor S. Shahidjanian), as well as participated in the festivals of sacred choral music "Gaude Mater" and "Logos", both in Poland. "Hover" collaborated also with a German choir from Hamburg, "Collegium Vocale" organizing 12 concerts of "Hover" around various cities of Germany.



In 2008 "Hover" hosted "Collegium Vocale" choir (conductor K. Trantow) in Armenia. A seminar dedicated to the Armenian sacred and secular music was organized in the town of Dilijan.

At the end of the same year "Hover" appeared in a concert in Dubai (the UAE), together with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra as part of a combined choir (conductor Brad Cohen).

The collaboration with the festival "Yerevan Perspectives" was fruitful. The festival gave the choir an opportunity to communicate with world-famous

contemporary composers realizing Yerevan premiere performances of their works.

Conducted by Andres Mustonen the choir performed the "Styx" by Giya Kancheli featuring Gidon Kremer.

In 2008 the Russian liturgy "The Sealed Angel" by Rodion Shchedrin was performed. The next year "The David's Psalms", "The Hymn to St. Adalbert" by Krzysztof Penderecki (conductor M. Klauza) and a number of sacred songs were performed. Then was performed "The Gates of Jerusalem" of Bronius Kutavičius (conductor by David Geringas).

In 2010 conducted by R. Shervenikas the pieces "The Canticle of the Sun" and "Jetzt immer Schnee" by Sofia Gubaidulina were performed. The appreciation given to "Hover" by Gubaidulina, Shchedrin, Kancheli, Penderecki, Kutavičius characterise the choir.

In 2008 the artistic director of “Hover” choir, Sona Hovhannisyan, was awarded a Gold medal of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia and in 2010 she was granted the title of the Honored Worker of Art. In 2009 “Hover” was awarded with the status of a State choir. Constant active cooperation with the Ministry of culture of Armenia has encouraged stable promotion of the choir. “Hover” continues to present new projects aiming at promotion of contemporary choral art by enriching the palette of the Armenian choral music. By subvention of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia a new theatrical choral performance, “The Parallel”, was implemented and recorded (music by A. Azizyan, director A. Manukyan) on the stage of the experimental theatre ԳՈՅ. The performance won “The Best Musical Project of year 2009” award in Armenia.

In May of 2010 “Hover” choir participated in Valery Gergiev's “Easter Festival” in Moscow with five concerts. In November “Hover” choir appeared at the competition-festival for professional choirs “Polyfolia” in France and also gave a special concert with famous virtuoso tabla performer Trilok Gurtu at St. Eustache Cathedral, Paris.

Starting from 2011 “Hover” has continued its activity as a member of the National Center of Chamber Music. It appeared with concerts at the competition-festival for professional choirs “La Fabbrica Del Canto”, as well as at “Teatro Dal Verme”, a prestigious concert hall in Milano.

In 2012 “Hover” chamber choir celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its professional activity and was awarded a Gold medal of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia. It appeared in a joint concert with the world-famous Italian tenor, Andrea Bocelli (as part of a combined choir). In the same year the soloists of “Hover” choir were formed into a vocal ensemble which was called the “Armenian Voices”. The same year the ensemble appeared with concerts in Germany and France successfully performing in the “Cité de la Musique” concert hall. That year was also remarkable by the concert program “Bach & Beatles”.

Starting from 2013 the VivaCell-MTS company (General Manager R. Yirikian) has become the General Sponsor of “Hover” State chamber choir. This circumstance initiated a new, significant stage for the choir promoting its creativeness, presenting conditions for realization of its versatile ideas and projects in full volume attaching a higher level of quality to the choir activity. “Hover” took part in an innovative staging of “Anouche” opera (director S.Avetikian, conductor V.Mardirossian). The premieres of this performance were held in Sundukyan State Academic Theatre in Yerevan and in Paris





“Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers.” In the same year the “Armenian Voices” ensemble appeared with 4 concerts within the framework of the “Taiwan International Choral Music Festival and Workshops” held in Taiwan. In December the “Armenian Voices” appeared with a solo concert in “Le Quartz” concert hall in Brest (France) and performed “Noel Oratorio” by C. Saint-Saens together with the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia (conductor Vahan Mardirossian). “Hover” also participated in the International festival of sacred choral music “Festival van Vlaanderen” in Mechelen (Belgium).

“Hover” took part in recording soundtracks to the films: “Ararat” (director Atom Egoyan), “La Masseria delle Allodole” (“The Lark Farm” – directors Taviani brothers), “Namus” (restored version of the Arte studio), “Tevanik” (director – J. Avetisyan) as well as to a number of other films.

During all years of its professional activity “Hover” has given great attention to works of Armenian contemporary composers, among them E. Mirzoyan, E. Hovhannissyan, Y. Yerkanian, V. Adjemian, V. Sharafian, A. Boyamyan, A. Avanesov, A. Voskanyan, V. Manukyan, A. Azizyan, S. Babatorosyan, S. Aghajanyan, A. Ghazaryan and others.



On January 15, 2014 “Hover” choir appeared with a solo concert dedicated to the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of maestro Krzysztof Penderecki held at the national center of chamber music

On January 30 it appeared at the Aram Khachaturyan concert hall in a concert dedicated to the memory of Artsakh hero Petros Ghevondyan. On February 11 and 13 “Hover” took part in the premier concert performance of “Tosca” opera by Puccini together with the Armenian State Philharmonic orchestra and the soloists. The event was held at the Aram Khachaturyan concert hall. On February 27 “Hover” took part in the concert evening commemorating Armenian prominent singer Lusine Zakarian held at the national center of chamber music.

During March-May of 2014 “Hover” appeared with a solo concert in the festival of compositional art named after R. Melikyan held at the national center of chamber music. (conductor - L. Yedigaryan), a concert held at the cultural business center (“Dom Moskvyy”) of Moscow in celebration of the Holy Easter, participated in the annual Ester Festival in Moscow organized by its founder Valeri Gergiev (concerts were held in Dimitrov church of “The Assumption of the Virgin Mary”, in Moscow in the church of “The Holy Trinity” as well as at the rehabilitation center for children. The closing gala concert of the festival was held at Moscow Tchaikovsky concert hall), then in the gala concert of “Hayak” cinema festival award ceremony held at the National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet after A. Spendiarian. “Hover” had an appearance at Byurakan city in a concert for honoured guests of the “Yerevan Perspectives” international festival.

On 3 June at A. Babajanian concert hall “Hover” took part in a charity concert organized to raise funds for children affected by AIDS. On 18 June the “Armenian Voices” ensemble went to Tbilisi (Georgia) to take part in a concert-performance dedicated to the 300 anniversary of Sayat-Nova held at the Georgian state drama theater after Sh. Rustaveli.

On 21 June the First Channel of the Armenian Public TV organized a video-shooting of a program about “Hover” and its activity. On 24 June “Hover” had an open-air concert appearance within the framework of the “Fresco” festival of sacred movies. On June 28 it had a solo concert at the national center of chamber music within the framework of the project “100 concerts in memory of the Armenian Genocide” (conductor - N. Shishmanyany).

On 1 September “Hover” took part in the premiere performance of an open-air staging of the opera “The Fire Ring” by A. Terterian held in Shushi (Nagorno-Karabakh) in collaboration with the Armenian state chamber choir and the national academic opera and ballet theater orchestra (stage director - M. Sahakyan, conductor - R. Asatryan). On 26 September and 8 October it had two concert appearances at Aram Khachaturyan concert hall and at the National center of chamber music within the framework of the “Days of Komitas” festival dedicated to the 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the composer. On 12 October “Hover” participated in a concert organized on the occasion of the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gevorgian seminary in Echmiadzin.

In November “Hover” had its solo recital at the national center of chamber music; participated in a jubilee concert dedicated to maestro Tigran Mansourian’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary held at the national academic opera and ballet theater after Alexander Spendiaryan, then took part in a concert in memory of the Armenian military leader Sepouh held at A. Babajanian concert hall.

In December “Hover” choir had its solo recital at the national center of chamber music, took part in the concert dedicated to the international day of choral art organized at Aram Khachaturian concert hall and then the choir members had an opportunity to meet a famous English film director Tony Palmer. The final performance of 2014 was

held on 9 December on the stage of the national academic theater of opera and ballet after A. Spendiarian within the framework of “Terterian Fest” international festival.



All concerts of “Hover” state chamber choir held in Armenia and abroad throughout 2015 were dedicated to the commemoration of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. The “Armenien Voices” ensemble continued its activity under the name of “Hover-septet”. In January they went to France to give concerts at “Théâtre Municipal de Rezé” (Nantes) and “Eglise de Saint-Valentin” (Guilers). In the same month “Hover-septet” participated in “MustonenFest” international festival in Estonia and Russia.

In 2015, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the choir activity, “Hover” released its seventh CD - “23 choir songs”, which comprised choral works by Komitas and contemporary Armenian composers. In February “Hover” took part in the recording of Gor Soudjian’s composition dedicated to the Armenian Genocide called “Separated”. The recording was done by “Brevis” studio. In March “Hover” choir appeared in the concert program of the mediaforum dedicated to the Centennial of the Genocide. In the same month “Hover” took Elżbieta Penderecka’s invitation to participate in the “19<sup>th</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival” in Warsaw, Poland. Concerts were held at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, at the “Church of Saint Cross” in Wrocław, at the Castle of Lublin as well as at the K. Penderecki European Center for Music in Łusławice. The choir also had the honor to be invited at maestro Penderecki’s residence.

On 14 April “Hover” had a solo recital dedicated to the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide at the Komitas museum-institute. On 24 April, 2015 by subvention of the ministry of culture of Armenia “Hover septet” took part in the Armenian-Lithuanian ecumenical Liturgy held at the Vilnius Cathedral (Lithuania) in commemoration of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. It also participated in the public meeting dedicated to the Centennial of the Genocide held at the Cathedral Square. On 28 April “Hover” took part in a concert dedicated to the Centennial of the Genocide held at the National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet after A. Spendiarian.

In early May “Hover” started its trip to the United States: it participated in the ecumenical ceremony dedicated to the Armenian Genocide Centennial held at Washington National Cathedral. The President of the Republic of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, Aram I, members of several Christian confessions, ministers and other high-ranking officials were present.

On 8 May, 2015 a concert dedicated to the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide was held at the “Strathmore Hall” of Washington D.C. with the participation of “Hover”, the Armenian National Philharmonic orchestra and a number of prominent musician-performers. The choir presented pieces by Komitas as well as fragments from the “Requiem” by T. Mansouryan. The concert ended by combined performance of the song “Cilicia” (conductor - E. Topchyan).

On 9 May, 2015 Garegin II served a Holy Liturgy in commemoration of the innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide at the “Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception”.

The Divine Liturgy by M. Yekmalian-Kh.Meykhanejian was performed by “Hover” choir as well as by the Armenian Church choirs from various states of America.

On 10 May a Divine Liturgy was served at the “St. Mary” church in Washington. The Liturgy by M. Yekmalian was performed by the members of “Hover” and Kh. Meykhanejian’s choirs (conductor - Kh. Meykhanejian).

On 26 May, 2015 “Hover” choir took part in the concert commemorating the victims of the Genocide organized on the initiative of a world famous pianist Evgeny Kissin within the series of international concerts “With you, Armenia”. The concert was held on the Isaac Stern stage of the prestigious Carnegie Hall, New-York. The evening was remarkable by premiere performance of the “3-rd Psalm”, a piece by Krzysztof Penderecki composed especially for the event of the Armenian Genocide Centennial. The composer granted the exclusive right of the first performance to “Hover” choir.

On 27 May, 2015 “Hover septet” took part in the opening ceremony of the “Book Expo America” international exhibition in New York.

The choir’s progress was covered in the Armenian and international press. The chief music critic for “The New York Times” daily newspaper Anthony Tommasini wrote about “Hover’s performance, “ ...the impressive Hover State Chamber Choir, founded by Sona Hovhannisyan, who conducted the impressive 25-voice ensemble *appeared* in the rewarding first half of the program. Folk songs arranged by Komitas ...were *full of* wistful lyrical turns and melting harmonies supported by earthy, steady bass drones. *Some were* fleet and jaunty with shouted rhythmic accents, though tinged with sadness.”

Rorianne Schrade wrote, “The wide-ranging “Waterfall Music” by Vache Sharafyan *sounded* fluent and impressive, the imaginative “Three Portraits of Women” (The Rainbow) by Tigran Mansuryan and a fanciful piece “The Little Prince and the Fox” by Anna Azizyan *were performed among* contemporary Armenian works. Internationally





renowned Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki's "Psalm III" dedicated to the Armenian Genocide was presented in a World Premiere. It was a moving performance. His "Psalm III" is a stirring work, full of faith but also of anger...The Hover Chamber Choir performed it with tremendous expressiveness. The concert certainly opened some musical doors."

On 6 June, 2015 "Hover" had a solo recital at the protestant church "Eglise Unie de Cannes" within the framework of "MIDEM" international music festival held in Cannes (France). The concert program included pieces by Armenian classical and contemporary as well as Western-European composers. Maestro Krzysztof Penderecki was present in person.

The same day "Hover septet" appeared at the closing ceremony of the day. The President of the Republic of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, ministers, Maestro Krzysztof Penderecki, Maestro Charles Aznavour and other honorable guests were present.

On 12 July, 2015 "Hover" participated in the opening ceremony of the "Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival" accompanying the first live-action silent movie and on 14 July it recorded the Armenian national anthem at the public radio studio (arrangement by V. Babloyan and A. Manukyan)

On 8 August "Hover" appeared in the open-air concert together with the Armenian national philharmonic orchestra and the national chamber choir at the "Beiteddine Art Festival" (Lebanon). Mozart's "Requiem" was performed. A famous violinist Sergey Khachatryan was also participating in the concert program (conductor - E. Topchyan). August 26 was remarkable by premiere performance of the "Eternal Life", a cantata for choir and piano quintet by Vache Sharafian. The concert took place within the framework of "The International Music Festival of Sion Valais" (Switzerland). The piece was dedicated to the Centennial of the Genocide.

On 14-20 September the choir appeared with two concerts at "Emilia-Romagna" festival at the philharmonic hall of Ljubljana (Slovenia) and at the "San Giacomo" church of Forli (Italy) as well as at the "Südtirol" festival at the famous "Santa Maria Assunta" church in the region Lana di Sotto of Merano (Italy).

On 28 September "Hover" participated at a gala concert held at Aram Khachaturian concert hall on the occasion of the Chrism Blessing ceremony. M. Ekmalian's "Lord's prayer" and Y. Yerkanyan's "Hymn to the Saint Martyrs" arranged for choir and orchestra were performed. On 1 October "Hover" performed Vache Sharafian's "Eternal Life" cantata for the first time in Yerevan within the framework of "The 9<sup>th</sup> international music festival".

On 3 October "Hover" took part in the ceremony of celebration of the German Unity Day held at the German Embassy of Armenia. On the next day it appeared in Komitas festival with a concert at the national center of chamber music.

On 10 October "Hover" appeared at the "Florence" restaurant welcoming maestro Charles Aznavour during an official dinner. The president of the Republic of Armenia, the Catholicos of All Armenians and other honorable guests were present. On 16

October the “VivaCell-MTS” company celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its activity in Armenia. The choir was happy to dedicate one of its most important solo recitals to this event.

On 29 October “Hover” took part in the concert in memory of Honored Artist of RA, choirmaster, teacher Emma Tsaturian on her 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The concert was held at the hall of the Armenian choir society. The next day “Hover” had a solo recital at the city of Goris.

On 7-11 November “Hover septet” appeared at the yearly sacred music festival “Les Sacrees Journees” in Strasburg (France). Concerts were held at the “La Grande Synagogue de Strasbourg”, “Chapelle Notre Dame à Ostwald” as well as “Cathedrale de Strasbourg”.

On 26 November “Hover” appeared at “Mezzo” club in a joint concert with “Michael Voskanyan and Friends” ethno-jazz group, and on 2 December “Hover septet” and “Hover” choir took part in the “Aram Khachaturian Festival”. The concert was held in Komitas museum-institute.

On 3 December, 2015, “Hover” had a solo recital within the series of yearly concerts organized by the “Center of Armenian Sacred Music”. On 11 December it had a short appearance at the opening ceremony of a personal exhibition of an Armenian painter, Gagik Chitchyan, held at the Museum of Contemporary Art. On 17 December, 2015 “Hover” appeared in a concert with the Armenian chamber choir and orchestra to perform Tigran Mansourian’s “Requiem” at the national center of chamber music (conductor - R. Mikeyan).

On 20 December “Hover septet” recorded a soundtrack for a theatrical performance “Pepo” to be played at the Sundukyan State Academic Theater (music by V. Sharafian). On 24 December “Hover” appeared at the Christmas festive concert together with the Armenian National Philharmonic orchestra.

“Hover” state chamber choir continues to present new projects aiming at promotion of contemporary choral art by enriching the palette of the Armenian choral music.