



HAMAZKAYIN

Newsletter **2012**



Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society
Published by Central Executive Board

CONTENTS

■ EDITORIAL	1
■ CULTURAL ACTIVITIES	2-13
HAMA ZKAYIN: NURTURING, CELEBRATING AND PROPAGATING THE ARMENIAN HERITAGE	
THE EREBOUNI DANCE SCHOOL AND ENSEMBLE	
THE "LEBANON" EXHIBITION BY THE LUCY TUTUNJIAN ART GALLERY	
THE SAYAT NOVA CHOIR CONCERT	
THE SPECIAL ISSUE OF PAKIN	
LITERATURE	
LECTURES	
MUSIC	
HAMA ZKAYIN EVENTS	
EXPANSION	
DANCE	
CULTURAL EXCHANGE	
ART	
MOVIES	
THEATRE	
FORUM	
■ EDUCATION	14
MELANKTON AND HAIG ARSLANIAN DJEMARAN	
ARSHAG AND SOPHIE GALSTAUN DJEMARAN	
■ HAMA ZKAYIN PROJECTS	15
HAMA ZKAYIN RECOGNIZES QUALITY AND VALUE	
■ HAMA ZKAYIN INSTITUTIONS	16-35
MARSEILLE DJEMARAN (SPECIAL REPORT)	
"HAMA ZKAYIN": A DYNAMIC TESTING GROUND FOR THE UNIQUE EXPRESSION OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY	
■ HAMA ZKAYIN ARCHIVES	36-37
TIMELESS TRUTHS ECHOING FROM THE LIVING ARCHIVES OF THE PAST	
■ CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE	38-39
IS THERE A RIFT BETWEEN THE ARMENIAN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE DIASPORA AND ARMENIAN YOUTH? IF YES, WHAT ARE THE REASONS?	
■ HAMA ZKAYIN PUBLICATIONS	40

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HAMAZKAYIN AND THE NEW GENERATIONS IN THE DIASPORA

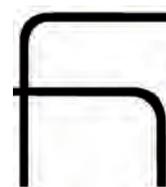
The Hamazkayin Society has a two-fold mission: to help preserve, develop and spread the Armenian culture, and to implement projects that ensure quality education and Armenian upbringing- this includes establishing and managing educational institutions. While Hamazkayin operates, within its means and resources, both in Armenia and Artzakh, its main focus of activity is the Diaspora.

Since its foundation Hamazkayin has established three Armenian schools - the Beirut, Marseille and Sydney Djemaran, geared towards the realization of the Society's goals. Our first newsletter featured a report about the Melankton and Haig Arslanian Djemaran. This second issue, besides illustrating the dynamic Hamazkayin activities that took place in 2012, focuses on the Hamazkayin Marseille Djemaran. It gives a detailed account of the founding of the school from its early beginnings and growth, to its mission, its educational system and management, highlighting its problems and achievements, as well as the concerns and viewpoints of its past and present managers. Moreover, the Special Report on Marseille Djemaran tries to convey to the reader the concerns and feelings, as well as the pedagogical methods of our educators, who try to teach young learners to master the Armenian language, and to foster a sense of Armenian identity in the challenging conditions of the Western world.

Warm interaction and active cooperation with the young generation through creative integration are vital for Hamazkayin to achieve its goals. One of the pressing issues facing the Hamazkayin Central Executive Board is the lack of close relationship with the youth today. Is there a rift between our organization and the new generations? To generalize the question, basically, is there a rift between the Armenian organizations of the Diaspora and the new generations? If yes, what are the reasons for it? Finding the answers to these questions is more urgent than ever because in the absence of close cooperation and integration between the youth and our organizations, the latter's mission is doomed to failure. Unfortunately there are no statistical studies to date that explore the issue in depth.

The Controversial Issue section of our newsletter tackles this issue and offers brief comments by Armenian intellectuals and cultural executives in the Diaspora. Certainly this is not an extensive analysis of the matter, but it may serve as food for deeper thought. We look forward to the participation of Armenian youth, intellectuals and Hamazkayin supporters at large in the discussion of this compelling issue.

**HAMAZKAYIN ARMENIAN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL SOCIETY
CENTRAL EXECUTIVE BOARD**



HAMAZKAYIN

NURTURING, CELEBRATING AND PROPAGATING THE ARMENIAN HERITAGE (THE YEAR 2012)

There is a steady increase, year by year, in the number of Hamazkayin activities that aim to foster a sense of collective identity among Armenians worldwide.

Listed in chronological order in this section is an archive of more than 300 cultural events that took place in 2012, bringing the rich Armenian heritage to life in 17 countries and several cities around the world.

The activities of more than 60 artistic groups and cultural institutions of Hamazkayin contribute to the renewal of Armenian community life in the Diaspora, to the affirmation of the unique cultural identity of Armenian communities, and to the reinforcement of their sense of belonging.

Each of these entities has its own distinctive history and the ability to appeal to an audience.

In this issue of our annual newsletter we have highlighted a few outstanding events.

Hamazkayin has also been capable of touching and uniting the hearts of the people even in times of crisis. The once prolific and dynamic Hamazkayin chapters in Syria have continued to operate in the war-ravaged country and have instilled the community with the will to survive. We proudly mention the handful of events that they have managed to organize during the grueling months of 2012.



CONFERENCE DEDICATED TO THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN SYRIA (ALEPPO)

The Hamazkayin Regional Committee of Syria continues its mission to serve the community enduring the horror of war. It invites intellectuals, representatives of different organizations and cultural executives to a conference in November. Photographs and videos on display at the conference exhibition depict the devastation wrought by the war.

Topics include: The operations of the Syrian Armenian Committee for Urgent Relief.

The role that cultural organizations and cultural executives may play.

The cultural heritage of the Armenian community in Syria and the importance of preserving it.

The need to present the plight of the Armenians in Aleppo through mass media outlets.

The participants, about 50 in total, reaffirm their commitment to stay put in Syria as an integral part of the nation.

The Armenia Office of Hamazkayin

Joins the Help your Brother initiative in support of Syrian Armenians and assists in the coordination and organization of projects.

THE EREBOUNI DANCE SCHOOL AND ENSEMBLE BRINGS THE ESSENCE OF ARMENIAN HERITAGE TO CULTURAL LIFE IN BOSTON



In September 2011 **Hamazkayin-Boston** founded the **Erebouni Dance School and Ensemble of Greater Boston** to meet the community's demands. Within a few months the number of students rose to 60. Parents were proud to see their children perform at the end of the inaugural season in June 2012, under the leadership of artistic director and dance teacher Arman Mnatsakanian.

The children were introduced to the world of dance through Mnatsakanian's pedagogical methods. They presented traditional Armenian dances with fresh and exciting expressions, with confidence and poise, writes the Boston based Armenian Weekly. In the presence of more than 500 spectators, they performed 14 pieces ranging from regional numbers such as Taroni Bar (Dance of Taron) to Mardakan Lorke (Martial Leap), and ended the event with a rousing performance of Hayer Miatzek (Armenians Unite).

The mission of the **Erebouni Dance School** is to provide an educational environment for children where they can learn the fundamentals of dance in a structured manner.

"We help children develop correct posture, body alignment, strength, flexibility, and coordination before instructing them in any specific dance discipline," explains Mnatsakanian in the same newspaper, adding that this is a holistic approach to dance training in most professional schools.

Arman Mnatsakanian is a graduate of the Armenian State School of Dance and was one of the major soloists of Paregamoutyun (Friendship) State Dance Ensemble in Armenia. He is also a trained dance instructor. His Vosgetar (Golden Age) Dance Ensemble has won numerous awards.

In November students from the **Erebouni Dance School** performed with Inga and Anoush Arshakian at the duo's Boston debut, experiencing the glamor of Armenian pop culture. They also danced at the Harvard Square Dance Festival and at the ARS Shoushi Chapter's thanksgiving dinner.

Noting that a live orchestra would enhance the learning process of the children and the enjoyment of the audience, **Hamazkayin-Boston** had invited a group of professional musicians led by Martin Haroutyunian to provide live music at **Erebouni's** inaugural performance. As quoted from the Armenian Weekly, Haroutyunian, the artistic director of the Arev Armenian Folk Ensemble believes that teaching Armenian traditional folk dances to children is "one way of keeping our traditions alive in the hearts of our younger generations".

The **Erebouni Dance School** opens its second season in September.

For further information visit the school online at www.hamazkayin-usa.org/erebouni



THE “LEBANON” EXHIBITION BY THE LUCY TUTUNJIAN ART GALLERY AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN ARTISTS AND CULTURES



“Three generations of artists in an exhibition in Lebanon; human suffering between modernity and the vicissitudes of contemporary life.”

It was in these words that the Lebanese newspaper Al-Hayat referred to “Lebanon”: a collective art exhibition held in September at the grand hall of Villa Zein and sponsored by the Prime Minister of Lebanon Najib Mikati.

The exhibition featured paintings, sculptures and mixed media creations by 36 artists* from Lebanon and Armenia. “What brings them together is Lebanon, which is reflected in the colors and themes, in the nuances and distinctiveness of their art,” wrote the Armenian daily newspaper Aztag in Lebanon.

The aim of the exhibition was to highlight “the important role that Beirut plays in the development of civilizations and the arts”, as Hagop Havatian, the director of the **Lucy Tutunjian Art Gallery** stated in his opening speech.

On this occasion the prime minister was presented with a souvenir in appreciation of his support. Najib Mikati praised the contribution of the **Lucy Tutunjian Art Gallery** to the Lebanese art scene and stressed the fact that “as long as such exhibitions are held in Lebanon, the future of the country is safe and it is possible to overcome the difficulties”.

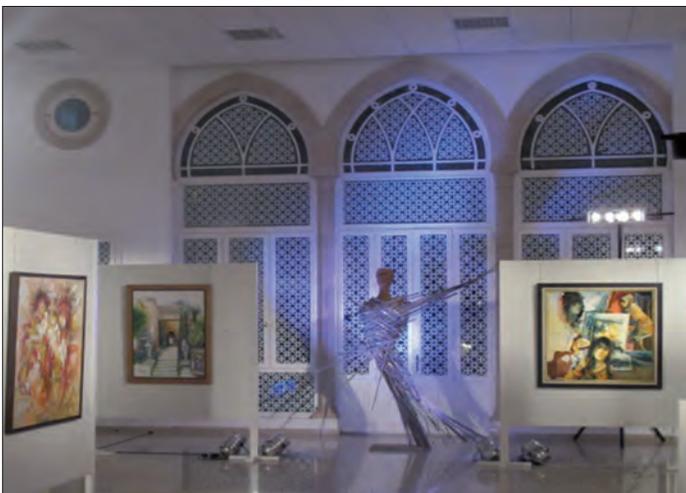
At the entrance of the exhibition hall official representatives, artists and art lovers were greeted by performances from the **Guitar Ensemble** of the **Parsegh Ganachian Music College** and students in the duduk and violin programs.

Local newspapers praised the exhibition and the selections that ranged from realism to abstraction and surrealism.

The exhibition conveys a message from “two different cultures living in the same place”, wrote the Lebanese newspaper Al-Hayat. And in an article titled: “Armenia and Lebanon, hand in hand”, The Daily Star described it as an event where visual arts from different cultures come together.

The Hamazkayin **Lucy Tutunjian Art Gallery** was founded in 2009 with a generous donation by Garbis and Lucy Tutunjian. The gallery aims to build on the activities of Hamazkayin, to introduce the public to prestigious works of art, to expose audiences to different artistic styles, to encourage creative dialogue and exchange between cultures, and to promote the Armenian culture.

In the course of 3 years the gallery has organized more than three dozen exhibitions featuring works by Armenian, Lebanese and international artists. Its permanent collection showcases works of renowned artists.



* The “Lebanon” exhibition featured the following artists: Agopian, Anna Shahnazarian, Arev Petrossian, Arpi Vartanian, Arthur K., Charbel Samuel Aoun, Charles Khoury, Daderian, Emmanuel Guiragossian, Faysal Sultan, Gago, Gerard Avedissian, Ghassan Ghazal, Gulen Der Boghossian, Guvder, Hrair, Hrach Aintablian, Jacqueline Ohanian, Janet Yapoujian, Jean Paul Guiragossian, Lavrendi Aghassian, Lucy Tutunjian, Manuella Guiragossian, Mireille Goguikian, Missak Terzian, Norikian, Raffi Tokatlian, Raffi Yedalian, Raouf Riffai, Razmig Bertizlian, RoseVart Sisserian, Seta Bekarian, Torossian, Wissam Beydoun, Zaven Khedeshian and Zeina Badran.

THE SAYAT NOVA CHOIR CONCERT

“A CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT”, “A PRESENTATION WORTHY OF HAMAZKAYIN”

The **Sayat Nova Choir** of the **Baruyr Sevag Hamazkayin Chapter** in Glendale is only three years old, yet it has already won accolades.

The choir held their second annual concert in October, performing national patriotic, classical and estrada songs before a packed house of more than 800.

“The audience showed their appreciation and approval with a rapturous standing ovation,” writes the Los Angeles based Armenian newspaper *Asbarez*.

“The performance was worthy of Hamazkayin,” states Sarkis Mahserejian in the same newspaper. “The hard work showed in the distinctive quality of the music, the program selected and the skillful choral renditions. It was a great reminder of the role that Hamazkayin plays in encouraging young musicians and composers or other artists for that matter; a role which Hamazkayin has traditionally undertaken.”

“While each choir member may have their own reasons for joining and diligently attending every practice session, the fact is they collectively serve the Hamazkayin mission, promoting Armenian culture, and enthusing their audiences,” writes Vicken Sosikian in an article for *Asbarez*.

Nora Roumian-Bairamian, the director of 40 non-professional singers, is the pivot around which the choir revolves. A professional musician in Lebanon, she has shown her dedication to Hamazkayin over the years, from Beirut to Los Angeles.

“It is truly baffling how she has managed to hone the **Sayat Nova Choir’s** gilded sound; and while playing the piano with her hands, her whole body and head, she conducts the choir unfalteringly with a wave of her hands and arms, through soft and powerful realms of



rhythmic songs,” writes Mahserejian. “One could describe her as the bone and marrow, the heart and soul, the dynamo and “juggler” of **Sayat Nova**.”

Actually Nora Roumian-Bairamian is not only the director of the **Sayat Nova Choir**, but also the concertmaster and the music arranger, and that is a unique combination.

“From the Middle East to Europe, to the United States and Russia, Armenians have lived in and contributed to various societies, while absorbing hints of diverse cultural influences,” explains the director to Sosikian. “Our selection reflects the evolutionary aspect of Armenian culture.”

From a stage decorated with Armenian symbols, the choir rendered a total of 15 selections, in Mahserejian's words, “exciting songs creating waves of undulating ecstasy” from Khachaturian, Doloukhanian, Haroutyunian, Altounian, Alemshah, Ganachian, Sayat Nova, Hagopian, Saripegian, Aznavour, as well as songs in Arabic, English and Russian.

The concert was also peppered with performances by star singers.

“When the stage overflows and captures the hearts and imaginations of audiences, that would be a sure ticket to success for both the choir and its director,” concludes Mahserejian.

THE SPECIAL ISSUE OF PAKIN- 2012 CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF VITALITY

The last issue of the literary and cultural quarterly Pakin in 2012 is dedicated to the evaluation of an overwhelming body of work spanning over half a century. Regular features in the magazine include poems, essays, plays, memoirs, literary criticism, philosophical, philological and archival material, the arts, interviews and translations. What makes this 50th anniversary issue special is the collection of warm tributes to the magazine that has endured over decades by renewing its vision. The following are abridged excerpts from testimonials that describe the atmosphere Pakin has created over time.

“Pakin’s mission was not limited to giving new impetus and vitality to the literature of the Armenian Diaspora. It also opened to the literature of Armenia and evaluated its latest achievements with unbiased judgment and fair stringency akin to the standards of Armenian writers and that of the media, while being brave enough to separate the wheat from the chaff; the spurious from the genuine; the fake from the real. It was able to keep up with the times, bringing to its readers the latest movements, trends and achievements in world literature. It developed as a literary school, and with a visionary enthusiasm focused upon encouraging young authors who matured and were forged in the furnace of Pakin.”

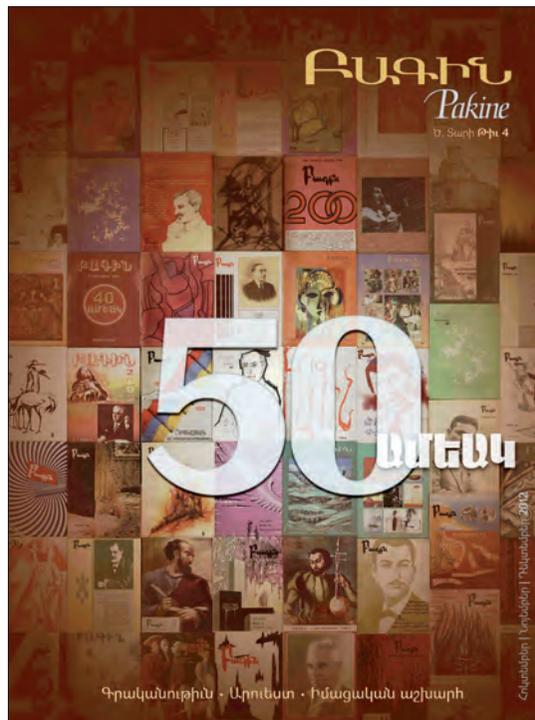
**ARAM I
CATHOLICOS OF THE HOLY SEE OF CILICIA**

“In 50 of the 1600 years of Armenian literature and letters Pakin was able to guard the past and the present, while opening to the future.”

**HAGOP BALIAN;
managing editor of Pakin**

“Literary theorists in Soviet Armenia were asked not to bring literature in line with rules mandated by the party, but to bring the party in line with literature. Pakin usually followed this standard; it extended the same demand to writers in Armenia and conducted appraisals accordingly... The opinions expressed indicate that our continual struggle for creative freedom was not in vain. Pakin has played a positive role in this context; and we can only be happy about this.”

**BOGHOS SNABIAN;
former editor of Pakin for 40 years**



“With the principles it professed and its Armenian national character Pakin was suppressed as forbidden literature under the Soviet regime It was a window on the world... There was a class of intellectuals who said: This is true literature.”

**Dr. MOVSES HERGUELIAN;
art critic**

“I still remember that it was a very captivating read. The determination to adhere to the highest literary standards and to carry forward the Armenian national-patriotic spirit exceeded everything else in those issues.”

**RAZMIG TAVOYAN;
poet**

“In Soviet Armenia we used to read Pakin with an insatiable interest, from cover to cover, and passed it to others. This was done in secret. The issues circulated from hand to hand and were read until they literally fell apart. Then we had to glue them together to circulate again. We used to learn a lot from this monthly periodical.”

**SOS SARGSIAN;
actor and director**

“The editorial team of Pakin has always been noted for its stringent practices; it has weighed literary productions using fine scales of measurement, and has required an equally delicate rendering of thought. Pakin has not deviated from its stringent rules despite criticism, because it has believed that a literary work is not an object offered for sale at the flea market, but it demands a certain standard, taste and novelty.”

**SARKIS MAHSEREJIAN;
former director/editor of Aztag Armenian daily**

“Pakin is a sanctuary in the Armenian Diaspora’s literary expanse.”

**SHAHANTOUKHD;
writer and journalist**



LITERATURE

PRESENTATIONS AND READINGS AT THE EDITORIAL OFFICES OF PAKIN (LEBANON)

- Khosrov Asoyan and his poetry book: *The Cry*.
- Hagop Balian and his novel: *America, America... Dream and Desolations of Destruction*.
- "Armenian Writers' Conference; Yerevan World Book Capital; Literary Diaspora": A discussion.
- "National Issues in the Theatre of the Armenian Diaspora": A discussion.
- "Written, Oral, Gutenberg, Digitalized Word and Book, Culture and Internet": Lectures.

THE VAHE SETHIAN PRINTING PRESS AND DISTRIBUTION CENTRE (LEBANON)

- Issues a calendar featuring artists from Armenia; in collaboration with the **Hamazkayin Armenia Office**.
- Launches the book: *Documents for the Study of ARF's History* by Yervant Pamboukian.
- Organizes a Children's Book Fair and Sale of Educational Games.
- Holds reading and pronunciation contests with 425 students from primary schools.
- Exhibits Hamazkayin publications at the 8th Yerevan Book Fair.
- Directs a book publishing contest for intermediate classes.
- Presents Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* at the Catholicosate of Cilicia; the author is awarded the Medal of St. Mesrob Mashdotz by the Catholicos of Cilicia.
- Hamazkayin publications are sold at two fairs (**Sao Paulo**).

CELEBRATING THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN PRINTING

- By the joint efforts of Armenian associations, the event includes a display, music, recitations and lectures:
 - "Historical Overview and Evaluation of Armenian Printing": Fr. Dajad Yardemian;
 - "From Venice to Madras: The Mekhitarist Printing Network": Dr. Sebouh Aslanian;The display includes old Armenian editions and classical typefaces (**Glendale**).
- A visit to an exhibition organized on this occasion at the Library of Congress in Washington (**Montreal**).
- A one day display of old Armenian editions, a slide show and a lecture in French:
 - "The Beginnings of Armenian Printing (1512-1800)": Meliné Pehlivanian (**Montreal**).
- Lectures at the **Hamazkayin Armenian Seminar**:
 - "A General Review": Vrej-Armen Artinian;
 - "Translating and Printing the Bible During the 18th and 19th Centuries": Rev. Dr. Manuel M. Jinbashian;
 - "Armenian Printing: the Protagonists- Clergy, Merchants and Local Communities": Meliné Pehlivanian;
 - "The Role of the Mekhitarists in the Development of Armenian Printing and Publishing": Marc Nishanian;
 - "Challenges Faced by the Armenian Print and Online Media": Vahakn Karakashian;
 - "The Printing Revolution in Europe and the Armenian Example": Meliné Pehlivanian (**Montreal**).
- "The 500th Anniversary of Armenian Printing": Lecture and slide show by Mourad Meneshian (**Chicago**).

COMMEMORATIONS

- Celebrating George Apelian's life and work with a book launch (**Lebanon**).
- A critical appraisal of George Apelian's oeuvre is followed by readings, recitations, music (**Kessab**).
- Baruyr Sevag's death anniversary is marked by playing recordings of his own voice, recitations, music (**Toronto**).
- An evening dedicated to Aram Haigaz and his literary oeuvre includes a lecture, recitations, music (**Lebanon**).
- A literary night dedicated to Baruyr Sevag features readings, songs, a video presentation (**Lebanon**).
- An appraisal of Vrej Klenjian-Tourian the man, the poet, the prose writer with speech and recitations (**Kessab**).
- Celebrating the life and work of Hamasdegh with a lecture, song and recitations (**Chicago**).
- An evening dedicated to Armenian martyred poets features recitations by the late Sarkis Der Khachadourian (**Lebanon**).
- An evening of Armenian literature and letters features readings of Armenian poems translated into Greek (**Thessaloniki**), (**Athens**).
- Marking the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing and the belated 75th anniversary of M. Medzarentz's death (**Orange County**).
- The 115th birth anniversary and the 75th death anniversary of Y. Charents are marked by readings, a lecture and songs (**Kessab**).
- Celebrating the 75th anniversary of the beginning of Jacques S. Hagopian's literary activities with readings, a lecture and songs (**Sydney**).
- Celebrating the 45th anniversary of Aris Sevag's career as a translator in memoriam on Holy Translators' Day (**New York**).
- The 140th death anniversary of Bedros Tourian is marked by a lecture, a staged scene, recitation, song, music and dance (**Sydney**).
- "Readings from Charents": dedicated to the 115th birth anniversary and the 75th death anniversary of the poet's death (**Lebanon**).

LITERATURE



LITERARY PRIZE

The Hamazkayin Regional Committee of Eastern USA announces the establishment of **Minas and Kohar Töölöyan Prize** in Contemporary Literature. The prize is awarded to writers of Armenian ancestry or for works about Armenian themes. It will be open to any work written in Armenian, English, French or Spanish.

HAMAZKAYIN BOOK LOVERS CLUB DISCUSSES ARMENIAN POETS AND WRITERS

- V. Terian, H. Sahian, A. Aharonian, Siamanto, A. Dzarougian, G. Emin, V. Davtian, B. Tourian, H. Baronian, V. Shoushanian, H. Toumanian (**Toronto**).
- V. Terian, Dzerentz (**United Arab Emirates**).
- Khrimian Hayrig, Z. Yesayan, Sayat Nova, B. Tourian, B. Sevag, M. Medzarentz, R. Sevag (**Cyprus**).

BOOK LAUNCH

- Berjouhi Avedian's book of short stories: Platform; the author evaluates "The Role of Women in Armenian Literature" (**UAE**).
- Sevag Torossian's novel: La prophétie d'Ararat (The Prophecy of Ararat); co-sponsored with Homenetmen-France (**Paris**).
- Artsakh: Jardin des traditions et des arts arméniens (Artsakh: Garden of Armenian Traditions and Arts); in the presence of authors (**Paris**).
- Tatul Hagopian's book on Turkish-Armenian relations: View from Ararat; with speeches and music (**Lebanon**).
- Khosrov Asoyan's volume of poems; with critical appraisals (**Los Angeles**).
- Dr. Zaven Messerlian's Before and after the Genocide; presentation and appraisal (**Lebanon**).
- Kaloust Babian's three-part photographic album: Retrospective; with a slideshow (**Toronto**).
- Stepan Partamian's three books: Yes, We Are; Yes, We Have; Yes, We Have Too (**Toronto**).
- Rouben Mnatsakanian's volume of poems: Man of the Sun; with a speech, recitation and songs (**Toronto**).
- Dr. Roubina Peroomian's The Armenian Genocide in Literature (**Los Angeles**).
- Hagop Arslanian's book: Open your doors, I am coming (**Toronto**).
- Chris Bohjalian's novel: The Sandcastle Girls (**Toronto**), (**Montreal**), (**Ottawa**), (**Lebanon**).
- Dr. Meliné Karakashian's book: Komitas: A Psychological Study (**New York**).

LITERARY PRESENTATIONS

- Nadia Bektashian tells Armenian fairy tales in Greek (**Thessaloniki**).
- A dinner party dedicated to Sayat Nova features readings of the bard's poems (**Cyprus**).
- An evening of poetry: By intermediate students after a three month course in poetry recitation (**Aleppo**).
- Book Presentation: Boghos Snabian's Decodings (**Lebanon**).
- "Literary Gems and Wine": Authors L. Koundakjian, N. Armani, L. Kasbarian and A. Zilelian read from their works (**New York**).
- An evening dedicated to Paren Hovsepian includes readings and songs; the poet discusses his own work (**UAE**).
- A compilation of Hagop Oshagan's writings, Scaling the Books, is presented by Boghos Snabian, the editor (**Armenia**).
- "Poetry and Impressions of Artzakh": Speeches by S. Guiragossian and Abdo Labaki (**Lebanon**).
- Poetry recitation competition is held for Hamazkayin Saturday school students (**Sydney**).
- Book presentation: Armenian Smyrna/Izmir, from a series on Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces, by Richard Hovannisian (**London**).
- Book presentation and slideshow: L'Arménie du Levant XIe- XIVe siècle (Armenia in the Levant) by Claude Moutafian (**Paris**).
- The **Radio Gomidas** reading series presents pieces of Armenian literature translated into Spanish (**Montevideo**).
- The literary magazine **Cassius** is launched; 7 issues are published between June and December (**Kessab**).
- **Story Hours**: a selection of novels is read to children on a monthly basis (**Montreal**).

LECTURES

- "The Holy Cross Church of Aghtamar Throughout History": Bedros Tomassian (**London**).
- "Searching for Tehlirian": Writer/actor Eric Bogosian discusses his career and his Tehlirian project (**New York**).
- "Armenia, the Armenian Community in Greece and the Armenian people": A series of lectures by S. Sghabatian, G. Kassabian, E. Gozaiti, E. Khasiotis, B. Savitis, B. Nerandzis, A. Kanabedian (**Thessaloniki**).
- "The Armenian Community in Turkey after 1915": Dikran Altun (**Cyprus**).
- "Visiting the Mekhitarist Monastery, Saint Lazarus, Venice": Levon Sarian (**Chicago**).
- "Who are Armenian Heritage Language Learners? The Future of Armenian Language in the Diaspora": Shushan Karapetian (**Pasadena**).
- "Getting Curiosity to Mars: A presentation about Curiosity": Arbi Garabedian, Richard Ohanian (**Boston**).
- "Ani, the City of 1001 Churches": Arda Ekmekji (**Lebanon**).
- "Historic Armenia Today: Between the Hidden and the Revealed (A Photographic Journey)": Khachig Mouradian (**Lebanon**).
- "Armenian Matters and the Crisis of Armenology; Centers for Armenian Studies: Europe and the USA": Dr. Seta B. Dadoyan (**Lebanon**).

MUSIC



PARSEGH GANACHIAN MUSIC COLLEGES OF HAMAZKAYIN

- The **Guitar Ensemble** gives its annual concert, and performs at: the **Gayane Dance School's** annual show; the Gathering in Support of Javakhk; the opening of a memorial plaque dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Shushi; the opening ceremony of the "Lebanon" exhibition by the **Lucy Tutunjian Art Gallery**; the Integral Armenia Festival.
- The **Dhol Ensemble** performs at the Integral Armenia Festival.
- The **Chamber Ensemble** performs at an event honoring Felix Harutyunian, in memoriam.
- The college presents: a recital by piano students; a graduate piano recital; an end-of-the-year concert; Datevig Artinian in solo performance (piano); the Jenterejian brothers (violin) in concert with Izabel Kayayan (piano), and in concert with Meguerdich Mikayelian (guitar).
- The college establishes a new introductory course in music education for 5-7 year old children (**Lebanon**).
- College students perform at an evening of poetry recitation (**Aleppo**).
- The college presents an end-of-the-year concert; as of 2012, graduates receive an official state-issued diploma (**Kokkinia, Greece**).

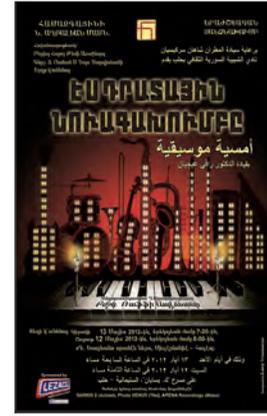
CHORAL AND MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

- Shushan Petrosian takes part in the **Hay Asdgher Junior Choir's** annual concert (**Toronto**).
- The **Gargach Children and Junior Choirs** celebrate their 15th anniversaries with a series of concerts; they perform at the Children's Book Fair organized by the **Vahe Setian Printing Press**; they render "Christmas Songs in Different Languages" at the Festival of Sacred Music in Beirut (**Lebanon**).
- The **Nigol Aghbalian Chapter Estrada Band** performs with singers from the community (**Aleppo**).
- The 5th anniversary of the **Nayiri Choir** is marked by Armenian folk songs and dances (**Sydney**).
- The **Gantegh Junior Choir** goes on stage with 52 young choristers (**Aleppo**).
- The **Sayat Nova Choir** performs patriotic, classical and estrada songs in annual concerts (**San Fernando**).
- The **Arekag Children's Chorus** (New Jersey) takes part in Arax Dance Ensemble's (San Francisco) performance; and in a concert held for the dual 20th anniversaries of the the UN membership of the RA and the establishment of the Armenian Armed Forces (**New York**).
- Leyla Saribekian sings with the **Knar Choir** in its annual concert (**Montreal**).
- The **Koussan Choir** performs at an event marking the 122th anniversary of the founding of the ARF (**Lebanon**).

SINGERS AND MUSICIANS HOSTED BY HAMAZKAYIN CHAPTERS

- Harut Pambukchian's dinner concert and recital of popular and patriotic songs (**Lebanon**).
- Vardan Badalian and Anna Khachatrian in joint concert with Aghtamar band and Carmen Ajemian (**Lebanon**).
- Shushan Petrosian's jazz dinner concert with Marcus Rivera (**Sydney**).
- Meguerdich Mikayelian's guitar concert with classical, Armenian and Spanish pieces (**Toronto**), (**Montreal**), (**UAE**).
- Classical guitar virtuoso Iakovos Kolanian in concert (**Boston**).
- Bass-baritone Vahagn Hovents in concert with Aren Avetian on piano (**Washington**).
- Artist reception: Garbis Aprikian, the director of Sipan-Komitas Choir; listening to his unpublished songs (**Paris**).
- Hasmik Papian and the Lebanese National Philharmonic Orchestra performing together (co-sponsored with AGBU) (**Lebanon**).
- Artist reception: Hasmik Harutyunian, folk singer and an expert of traditional Armenian folk music (**Boston**).
- Shoghig Torossian's classical recital with Hasmik Gasparian (Piano) (**Lebanon**).
- Classical soprano Helene Zindarsian in CD release concert (**Chicago**).
- String Harmonies: Antranik Kizirian (oud), Yervand Kalajian (violin), Vik Momjian (bass) performing live (**Glendale**).
- The Art-Cinema quartet from Armenia in concert (**Lebanon**).
- The State Song Theatre of Armenia presenting the musical "Komitas; I have come" (**San Francisco**).
- Babajanian Trio in concert (**Montreal**), (**Toronto**); Oshagan Trio in concert (**Toronto**).
- Adis Harmandian's award nomination procedure; the singer is awarded the Medal of Komitas by the RA Ministry of Diaspora (**Armenia**).
- Rouben Hakhverdian and his band performing old and new songs; artist reception held for the singer and his band mates (**Lebanon**).
- Inga and Anush Arshakian's duo concert featuring performances by Hamazkayin dance ensembles (**Boston**), (**New York**).
- Hrant Parsamian (cello) accompanied by Tatjana Parsamian (piano) in classical concert (**Washington**).
- Song of Songs: Facebook votes and a panel of judges choose the 2 winners for the song contest (**Lebanon**).
- Papin Poghosian in concert with the Vanush Khanamirian Dance Academy (**San Francisco**).
- String Harmonies and Armenian Public Radio performing Armenian music (**Glendale**).

MUSIC



THE ARAM KHACHATURIAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC IS FOUNDED IN WATERTOWN (BOSTON)

The new Hamazkayin institution opens at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center in November. It offers comprehensive music instruction for community members of all ages with flexible scheduling.

COMMEMORATIONS ORGANIZED BY REGIONAL CHAPTERS

- An evening dedicated to the 300th birth anniversary of Sayat Nova features: a speech, a video presentation, recitation, song, kamancha and dance (**Kokkinia**).
- An event featuring celebrated artists is held for the dual 20th anniversaries of the membership of the RA to the UN and the establishment of the Armenian Armed Forces (co-sponsored with other organizations) (**New York**).
- Anahid Ishkhanian performs patriotic songs in a concert celebrating the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Shushi (**Paris**).
- An evening of classical music on the occasion of May 28 is dedicated to the friendship between Armenia and Syria (**Aleppo**).
- An evening dedicated to Edik Hovsepian, the late conductor of the **Koussan Choir** includes a speech, a video presentation, performances by former choristers and the **Hay Asdgher Junior Choir (Toronto)**.

HAMAZKAYIN EVENTS

- Dinner marks the 30th anniversary of the **Taniel Varoujan Chapter (Fresno)**.
- “Armenian Month”: Celebrates the centennial of the liberation of Thessaloniki, the municipality of the city hosts lectures, exhibition of ancient artifacts, video displays, literary presentations (**Thessaloniki**).
- “We Will Struggle to the Last Drop”: A cultural event dedicated to the Armenian Genocide showcases the **Ayk Choir**, the **Arek Children's and Youth Theatre School**, the **Parsegh Ganachian Music College**, the **Gayane Dance School**, the **Toros Roslin Art School**, the **Knar Dance Ensemble (Lebanon)**.
- The **Hamazkayin USA Western Region** honors longtime devoted members: Kourken Kasabian, Gabriel Injejian, Hovannes Manougian, Papken Sassouni, Varoujan Demirjian, Onnig Keshishian (**Pasadena**).
- Hamazkayin honors Zaven Khedeshian the sculptor is awarded the medal of St. Mesrob Mashdotz by Aram I, the Catholicos of Cilicia (**Lebanon**).
- Spelling and vocabulary contests for students from Armenian Saturday schools (**New York**).
- The **Hamazkayin USA Eastern Region** holds its 2nd annual pan-gathering and cultural evening (**New Jersey**), (**New York**).
- An event celebrating May 28 showcases a speech, a staged scene, a documentary film, recitation, dance (**Thessaloniki**).
- Serving Armenian cuisine at the Traditional Food Festival organized by the municipality (**Alexandroupolis, Greece**).
- Pilgrimage to ancestral lands in Western Armenia; a journey through history (**Cyprus**).
- The dual 21st anniversaries of the independence of the Republic of Armenia and the founding of Artzakh as an independent state are marked by a memorial service, screening of documentary films, a lecture and a cultural program (**Buenos Aires**).
- 20 Armenians and Greeks join the Hamazkayin cultural tour to Armenia (**Athens**).
- An evening with the Armenians of Musa Ler and Ainjar features a lecture, slideshow, recitation, stories (**Orange County**).
- Weekly cultural gatherings and Armenian programs for Armenian students attending foreign schools (**Lebanon**).
- “Career in the Arts”: A panel discussion features prominent American-Armenian artists (**Pasadena**).
- Dinner marking the 30th anniversary of the **Baruyr Sevag Chapter** features the **Sayat Nova Choir (San Fernando)**.
- Meeting with Armenologist Ardzvi Pakhchinian, translator Samuel Mekertchian, singer Mekertich Mekertichian (**Armenia**).

EXPANSION

THE HAMAZKAYIN HAYASA CHAPTER IS FOUNDED IN NANCY (FRANCE)

Members of the **Hamazkayin Central Executive Board** inaugurate the more than 30 member strong Hayasa Chapter after holding a founding meeting in October. The Hayasa community opens its first Armenian cultural house and school sponsored by Hamazkayin. The school teaches Armenian language, literature, history and culture to 70 students. For the first time students celebrate the New Year by performing in Armenian.

DANCE



- The **Nayiri** (adult's), **Nanor** (teen's) and **Maralo** (children's) **Dance Groups** stage "We are Our Mountains", with 90 dancers; They take part in the New Smyrna Festival's Armenian Night, where they dance before a 1500 strong audience. The **Nayiri Dance Group** performs at: the International Food Festival's Folk Dance Night by the International Women's Organization of Greece; a Lions Club event; the evening dedicated to Sayat Nova; an event on the occasion of May 28; the Cultural Festival in Corinth, where they are honored by a memorial tablet; an event marking the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Armenian Armed Forces held at the Greek Officers' Club. Takes part in the production of a documentary film by Channel 3 (**Greece**).
- The **Shushi and Sardarabad Dance Ensembles** perform at an evening of poetry recitation by students (**Aleppo**).
- The **Hayasa Dance Group** takes part in the Festival of National Cultures; dances at the New Year Festival organized by the Armenian community (**Nancy**).
- The **Ani Dance Ensemble** enlivens the Armenian Heritage Cruise; dances at the Ottawa Armenian Festival; teaches Armenian circle dance at the Children's Festival organized by the Armenian Prelacy of Canada (**Montreal**).
- The **Sipan Dance Ensemble** gives its annual performance. They dance at: the "Armenia on Stage" concert; a UN event on "Peaceful Coexistence"; an event marking the Slovak Embassy's "Peace" initiative; an event on the occasion of May 28; a ceremony promoting Nicosia's candidacy for European Cultural Capital 2017; the 7th Mediterranean Folk Dance Festival in Larnaca and Yeri (showcasing Armenian national costumes) (**Cyprus**).
- The **Knar Dance Ensemble** dedicates its annual performance to the memory of its longstanding choreographer Felix Harutyunian; takes part in the youth vigil in commemoration of the Armenian Genocide; in the **Gayane Dance School's** biannual performance; performs at an evening dedicated to Felix Harutyunian in memoriam; offers dance lessons for women at the **Levon Shant and Jirair and Tzoline Khachadourian Centres**. The **School Dance Festival of the Knar Ensemble** showcases 18 Armenian dance groups (**Lebanon**).
- The **Gayane Dance School** and its 250 students present their biannual performance. They take part in: the **Knar Dance Ensemble's** annual performance; the event honoring Felix Harutyunian (the event also includes a speech, music, a video and accounts of his work) (**Lebanon**).
- The **Erebouni Dance School and Ensemble of Greater Boston** performs with Inga and Anoush Arshakian; they dance at the Harvard Square Dance Festival and at the ARS Shushi Chapter's Thanksgiving dinner; give their inaugural performance with the Arev Armenian Folk Ensemble (**Boston**).
- The **Erebouni** (Boston), **Meghri** (Philadelphia) and **Nayiri** (New Jersey) **Dance Ensembles** appear with Arshakian Sisters in concert (**Boston**), (**New York**).
- The **Erebuni Dance Institute and Ensemble** (of Toronto) stages "Armenia is Calling..." with 80 dancers. They dance at the "Freedom of Speech" event; the Armenian Centre's Chrystal Gala; the Ottawa Armenian Festival; a dinner sponsored by the municipality; an event marking the 35th anniversary of Homenetmen in Canada. They take part in the My Armenia Dance Festival in Yerevan (**Toronto**).
- The **Araz Dance Troupe** takes part in the annual Armenian Food Festival (**San Francisco**).
- The **Sardarabad Dance Ensemble** (of Chicago) takes part in the Skokie Festival of Cultures with the Hamazkayin chorus; stages its annual performance "Dreams of my Land", with the **Arax Dance Troupe** of Detroit (**Chicago**).
- Hamazkayin hosts the performance of GM-Max and Husher Dance Groups of Yerevan (**Alexandroupolis, Greece**).
- The **Ani Dance Company** joins the Ensenada Cruise and charms an audience of 2000 people; gives performances in South Bay, Orange County and Fresno (**Glendale**).
- The **Shiraz Dance Ensemble** celebrates its 40th anniversary; former dancers take part in the celebratory performance. The ensemble performs with singer Sahak Sahakian in concert on the occasion of May 28 (**Montevideo**).
- The **Nayiri Ensembles of Young and Adult Dancers** (of Sydney) give their 12th annual performance with more than 200 dancers, accompanied by the Zvartnotz Dance Ensemble invited from the US. They dance at the New Year Festival organized by the Armenian community (**Sydney**).
- The **Nayiri Ensembles of Young and Adult Dancers** (of San Fernando) dance at a dinner marking the 30th anniversary of the **Baruyr Sevag Chapter** (**San Fernando**).

CULTURAL EXCHANGE (ARMENIA)

- The **Hamazkayin Armenia Office** sends musicians and dance teachers to different Armenian communities in the Diaspora; continues to cooperate with **Pakin**, motivating writers from Armenia to contribute for the magazine; joins the efforts of the RA Ministry of Diaspora to develop Armenia-Diaspora cooperation projects.

ART



EXHIBITIONS AT THE HAMAZKAYIN LUCY TUTUNJIAN ART GALLERY

- RoseVart Sisserian: *Oils and Acrylics (for charitable purposes)*.
- Arthur K. (Dr. Harout Nicolian): *"Human Rights and Heritage", mixed media (for charitable purposes)*.
- Faysal Sultan, Theo Mansour, Charbel Samuel Aoun, Wissam Beydoun: *Joint exhibition*.
- Shart: *A tribute (paintings from private collections)*.
- Dikran Daderian: *50 years of creativity; the painter is awarded the Medal of St. Mesrob Mashdotz by the Catholicos of Cilicia*.
- Gerard Avedissian: *"Homage to Ancestors", paintings*.
- Raffi Tokatlian: *"Enlightenment", bronze sculptures*.
- Hrair: *"Splendor in color", album signing and exhibition*.
- Missak Terzian: *"A Touch of Passion", paintings*.
- Guvder: *Album signing and exhibition; paintings, drawings, art created in various materials*.
- Beirut Art Fair: *Exhibiting at the international art fair with 50 other art galleries*.
- "Lebanon": *Group exhibition featuring 36 artists from Lebanon and Armenia*.
- Janet Hagopian-Yapoujian: *Oil paintings*.
- Gagik Ghazanchian and Lilith Soghomonian: *"Two Perspectives", paintings*.
- Dr. Haroutyun Armenian: *Watercolors*.
- Krikor Norikian: *"With Time", oil paintings (in collaboration with Byblos Bank)*.
- Jirair Panossian, Sevag Armenian, Raffi Andonian, Doreen Khanamirian-Al Zein: *Joint exhibition; paintings and sculpture*.

TOROS ROSLIN ART SCHOOL (LEBANON)

- Holds its mid-term and end-of-the-year exhibitions with works by 109 students; and an open-air class for 80 students.
- Organizes a painting competition with entries from 22 Armenian schools in Lebanon.
- Establishes a new 7 year academic program; creates master-classes.
- Refurbishes the art studio at the **Levon Shant Centre**; opens the **Ara Kekejian Floor**.

AT THE ARSHILE GORKY ART STUDIO AND EXHIBITION HALL (TORONTO)

- Meruzhan Khachatryan from Armenia: Artistic creations on Armenian themes.
- David Galstian from Armenia and Tamar Sargsian from France: Art works.
- Ida Kar: "Return to Armenia, 1957"; photo exhibition.
- From the **Arshile Gorky Art Studio**: Paintings based on dance themes are displayed at the **Erebouni Dance Group's** performance.
- **Painting classes**: for children (8-14 old).

EXHIBITIONS ORGANIZED BY REGIONAL CHAPTERS

- Bedros Aslanian: *paintings (Montreal)*.
- Armen Daneghian: *Miniature paintings (Toronto)*.
- "Armenian Art Exhibition": *Artists from greater LA showcase their work at the 2nd annual exhibition (Pasadena)*.
- Educational posters on Armenian themes: *Design, publishing, distribution (Glendale)*.

MOVIES

- Screening of the documentary *Karabagh's Wounds* by Tsvetana Paskaleva (**Thessaloniki**), (**Cyprus**).
- Screening of the documentary *Charents in Search of my Armenian Poet* by Shareen Anderson (**Sydney**).
- Screening of the film *The Lark Farm (La masseria delle allodole)* by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani (**Washington**).
- Screening of the film *The Lark Farm*; followed by an exhibition of A. Wegner's photographs of the Armenian Genocide (**Nancy**).
- Screening of the film *The Cross-Thief's Memoir* by Hrach Keshishian (**Washington**).
- Premier of the film *Singing Summers* dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Varanda Junior Choir in Artzakh; The **Hamazkayin Central Executive Board** financially supports the production of Hrach Tokatlian's film (**Armenia**).
- The **7th Pomegranate Film Festival** features 34 films by Armenian directors or on Armenian themes from 12 countries (**Toronto**).
- Screening of the documentary *Being a Citizen* by Arevik Martirosian; followed by a discussion (**Armenia**).
- **Ciné-club**: Regular screenings of films (**Montreal**).



THEATRE

- The newly formed theatre group of the **Levon Shant Chapter in Valence** presents Hagop Baronian's *The Flatterer* (**Valence**), (**Marseille**), (**Lyon**), (**Paris**).
- The **Kasbar Ipekian Theatre Company** presents Marcel Pagnol's *The Merchants of Glory*; celebrating the 70th anniversary of the company's birth, former and new members stage Issam Mahfouz's *Zanzalakht*; stage directors take part in the discussion of *Zanzalakht* (**Lebanon**).
- A round table dedicated to the Lebanese Armenian theatre with the participation of stage directors; and launch of E. Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* in Armenian, translated by director Varoujan Khedeshian (**Lebanon**).
- Discussion about the activities of the Hamazkayin theatre unit in Lebanon and the state of the Lebanese Armenian theatre (**Lebanon**).
- The **George Sarkissian Theatre Troupe** presents Jacques S. Hagopian's *The Crane Calls* (**UAE**).
- An inter-school drama competition: 7 teams work on everything from playwriting to staging (**Aleppo**).
- The newly formed **Theatre Group of the Hovannes Toumanian Chapter** presents 6 plays by Arshag Khntirian (**Glendale**).
- The **Bedros Atamian Theatre Troupe** stages Francis Veber's *Dinner for Schmucks* (**Montreal**).
- At the end-of-the-year graduation event 18 graduates from the **Arek Children's and Youth Theatre School** perform mimes and plays: *Autumn*, *Sculpture*, *Barber*, *The Cat and Dog*;
The Arek Children's and Youth Theatre Group presents H. Toumanian's *The Cat and Dog* at the Children's Book Fair organized by the **Vahe Sethian Printing Press** (**Lebanon**).

PLAYS HOSTED BY REGIONAL CHAPTERS

- Vahik Pirhamzei's new comedy: *I Don't Need a Psychologist* (**Toronto**).
- Narek Durian's autobiographical comedy: *Ces't la Vie* (**Sydney**).
- Marie Rose Abousefian's solo performance: *Krikor Zohrab on the Road to Golgotha* (**Lebanon**), (**UAE**).
- Marie Rose Abousefian's solo performance: *Tigran the Great - King of Armenia* (**Cyprus**).
- Aram Hovhannisian's *One Man Show* (the actor from Armenia performed at the World Shakespeare Festival) (**London**).
- Pierre Shamasian's *One Man Show* (**Lebanon**), (**Sydney**).
- Hagop Baronian's *Brother Balthazar* (Baghdasar Aghpar) by the Armenian Theatre Group of Khaskovo in Bulgaria (**Thessaloniki**).

FORUM

**An opportunity to know the motherland;
to affirm a sense of belonging;
to discuss critical issues in Armenia and the Diaspora.**

*The 19th Hamazkayin Forum in July
brings together 40 students from 10 different countries.*



Young people from diverse cultural backgrounds

- visit the Yerevan State University, the American University of Armenia, the Yerevan Chess House, the Tumo Centre for Creative Technologies, Our Lady of Armenia Camp, Echmiadzin, the tomb of Mesrob Mashdotz, the History Museum of Armenia, the Armenian Genocide Museum, art museums and medieval monasteries.
- climb Mount Arakadz; enjoy concerts.
- attend lectures on core topics:
"The Armenian Letters, Culture and History", "On the Threshold of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide", "Who is Armenian? Issues of Identity", "The Evolution of the Diaspora", "The impact of the Genocide on Armenian Painting", "National Musical Instruments".
- take part in panel discussions and express their opinion about matters of Armenian concern.
- are presented with a certificate of appreciation and a cup of honor by an RA Army unit.



EDUCATION

MELANKTON AND HAIG ARSLANIAN DJEMARAN (LEBANON)

- Singers from the Haygazunk Ensemble from Armenia perform for the students and enthrall them with patriotic songs.
- Garegin Chookaszian from Armenia presents his CD-ROM: Komitas Vartabed: the life and works.
- Raffi Tokatlian shares his experience of climbing Mount Ararat with the students.
- Sevan Kabakian, executive director of Birthright Armenia provides information about the organization's projects.
- Hasmig Nalbandian and Carina Mouchoyan, staff members of The Goguikian Foundation talk to the students.
- Garine Torossian from the Armenian Ministry of Education introduces methods of teaching Armenian to Djemaran teachers.
- **A memorial service is held for the brothers Melankton and Haig Arslanian, the school's benefactors.**
- Ken Khachigian, chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America talks to the students about the role of the committee.
- Teachers from the Anania Shirakatsi Djemaran in Armenia get acquainted with M. & H. Arslanian Djemaran's curriculum.
- **The annual dinner fundraiser for the M. and H. Arslanian Djemaran's Student Fund raises 110 thousand USD in donations; 50 thousand of which from dinner sponsors Vahe and Nora Yakoubian.**
- The school holds an Orthopedagogy Day, Educational Day, Anti-Bullying Campaign, a Sports Day and a Reading Week.
- **The British Ambassador Tom Fletcher visits Djemaran and is introduced to its various sports activities; Djemaran forges a sister institution agreement with Westfield College in London.**
- Djemaran's senior benefactor's (Haig Arslanian) wife Shaké Arslanian and her sons Armen and Shahé visit the school.
- Abdo Labaki, author of Arabic textbooks and Rabia Abi Fadel, professor of Arabic literature visit Djemaran.
- **French Baccalaureate: 43 out of 45 students succeed in the international exams.**
- Students rank first in inter-school Armenological contests, artistic competitions and sports tournaments.
- Armenian-Amercian author Chris Bohjalian presents his novel The Sandcastle Girls.
- **The school unveils "The Armenian Djemaran's Wall of Gratitude"; inaugurates the "Souren and Sonia Sarkissian Computer Room".**

ARMENIAN COURSES

- **The Armenological Institute** moves to the Aram Manougian Centre due to security reasons (**Aleppo**).
- Weekly courses focusing on the Armenian language are offered at 3 levels now in their 50th year (**Buenos Aires**).

ARSHAG AND SOPHIE GALSTAUN DJEMARAN (AUSTRALIA)

- The academic year starts with Shushan Petrosian's student concert and an official ceremony.
- The college welcomes 25 new students; the library is enriched with 400 new books.
- Teachers adopt a new line of Armenian textbooks.
- **There are no longer external examinations for students of Year 10; they receive a Record of Achievement based on their school assessment for each subject.**
- The college joins the Peninsula Independent Sport Association (PISA) and participates in local inter-school sports competitions.
- **A Memorial Day is set aside to honor Djemaran's benefactors; a memorial service is held at the Donors' monument.**
- Students present a cultural program at the ARS lunch events in celebrations of Midlent and Palm Sunday; they launch the "Students' Voice" monthly radio program on Voice of Sardarabad; they take part in a number of inter-school competitions and sports tournaments; also in the Islamic College's Harmony Day.
- **Bring a Friend Day: Students and staff welcome 40 school age friends who experience the heritage of Armenian culture at Djemaran.**
- The **Nanor Choir of Djemaran** sings at an event for the 75th anniversary of the beginning of J. S. Hagopian's literary activities.
- The **Nanor and Paylogh Asdgher Choirs**, the Drama Class, the **Clarinet Choir**, the **Violin and Guitar Ensembles**, the **Children of Ararat Jazz** band take part in the school Gala concert.
- Students celebrate Book Week and parade dressed as their favorite book characters.
- **The celebration of the independence of Armenia in the picturesque school grounds attracts about 1000 people;** Arman Hovanissian and his band from Armenia, the Pomegranates band, the **Nanor Choir** and the **Nayiri Dance Group** of Djemaran enthuse audiences.
- Students of Year 10 visit Armenia and Artzakh, accompanied by their teachers.
- **More than 170 supporters join the school's 25 km walk-a-thon and fundraising event.**
- Students present musical and dance performances at the Armenian Festival, parents sell food items to raise funds for the college.

HAMAZKAYIN RECOGNIZES QUALITY AND VALUE

HAMAZKAYIN INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS SPONSORED BY THE CENTRAL BOARD

It is a well known fact today that the situation in the field of teaching Armenian subjects in the Diaspora has reached a critical stage. There is a significant decline in the number of qualified teachers in the area of Armenian education. Keen for the new generation to have an Armenian upbringing, the Hamazkayin Central Executive Board has embarked upon a plan to prepare skilled teachers and educators. It also pledges to hold qualified teachers in high esteem and to keep them motivated in their respective fields. To this end, the Board has undertaken the following measures:

PREPARING NEW TEACHERS

Students graduating with good results in Armenian subjects from Armenian schools in the Diaspora, who decide to pursue a bachelor's degree in education, will be sponsored by Hamazkayin to study in their own country. After graduating with a BA degree and a Teaching Diploma, they should enroll in the Armenian program at the Yerevan State University to earn a master's degree to teach Western Armenian language, Armenian history, Armenian literature and Armenian Culture.

The Hamazkayin Central Executive Board covers their full tuition fees and the cost of stay in Armenia. In return, students are required to sign an agreement and assume the moral responsibility to teach any subject in Armenian for a minimum of 7 years after graduation, in an Armenian school.

The project has been launched; 3 students are already pursuing a bachelor's degree in education.

To this aim, the Hamazkayin Central Executive Board is ready to cooperate with Armenian schools in the Diaspora, as well as with educational and charitable organizations.

Students interested in joining the project can contact the Hamazkayin Central Executive Board office at: central@hamazkayin.com; 00961-4-715684

HIGH ESTEEM AND FINANCIAL REWARD

Young people are discouraged from studying Armenian subjects and pursuing a teaching career, first because they are paid a modest salary, and second because the Armenian milieu does not give due respect to teachers of Armenian subjects.

In order to change this situation and set a precedent, the Hamazkayin Central Board has decided to reward teachers of Armenian subjects with pay increases in the Hamazkayin Djemarans of Beirut and Marseille it sponsors.

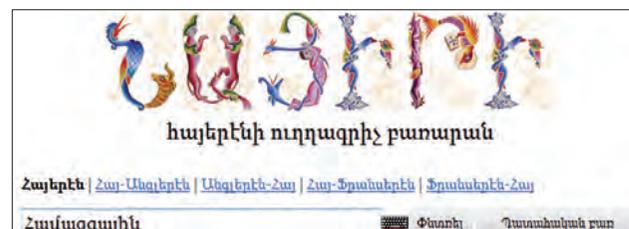
Hence, current teachers will receive an immediate 10 percent pay raise, while in the future new teachers will receive 25 percent higher than the normal salary for their level of education.

The project has been launched.

NAYIRI LIBRARY OF ELECTRONIC DICTIONARIES

The Hamazkayin Central Executive Board financially supports the Nayiri Library of electronic and digitized dictionaries.

- Nayiri has its roots as a Western Armenian dictionary with integrated spell checker, word stemmer, and virtual keyboard.
- Over the years, the site has grown to incorporate Eastern Armenian as well as bilingual (English and French) Armenian dictionaries.
- In 2012 Nayiri launches Hrachia Adjarian's Armenian Etymological Dictionary as an imaged dictionary.
- In 2013 it adds the digitized versions of 2 more dictionaries: Explanatory Dictionary of Contemporary Armenian; New Dictionary of the Armenian Language.
- Also available are the digitized versions of Armenian Explanatory Dictionary, Modern Armenian Explanatory Dictionary and Armenian Language Thesaurus.
- Nayiri.com is freely accessible and receives an average of 25 thousand visitors per month.



FINANCIAL AID

The Hamazkayin Central Executive Board donates computer hardware to the No. 2 School in Pertsor (Artzakh).

MARSEILLE DJEMARAN

“HAMAZKAYIN” A DYNAMIC TESTING GROUND FOR THE UNIQUE EXPRESSION OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY

It was a project that was deemed impossible by everyone, but more than thirty years after its inception it commands respect by meeting its unwavering goals.

People in France recognize it as “Hamazkayin”. The school that began with four kindergarten pupils in a dilapidated building, grew along with its students and expanded year by year to move into a radiant new structure. The story is often told as a legend.

Its vision: Keep the Armenian language and the Armenian way of life alive and dear in the presence of the dominant French culture; provide a normal atmosphere- without strained or forced effort- to cultivate a sense of Armenian identity among French-Armenian children; give them the chance to open to the world through their own ethnic language and culture.

There has been no standstill or downturn in Marseille Djemaran. A chronology of achievements in education and the construction of school facilities provides an unbroken chain of development which has helped build public confidence in the school.

One of the secrets of Djemaran’s endurance is that it is the only K-12 Armenian school in France which seeks to raise good human beings, as well as good Armenians. And this is the pivot of Djemaran’s educational program. On the other hand, the school implements the French official program and delivers high quality education; children grow up in a warm family atmosphere, they form close human relationships, and they succeed in the baccalaureate exams.

Since its foundation the Marseille Djemaran has established itself as an exemplary institution. It has emerged as a symbol of pride and honor for the Armenian community; a landmark visited by every prominent Armenian who arrives in Marseille.

There was no legion of specialists helping Djemaran thrive, but a bunch of tenacious people, school board members and teachers who had the conviction and stamina to remain steadfast. Looking toward the future and with the support of the Hamazkayin Central Executive board, they worked day and night to expand the school beyond its Kindergarten by adding a grade level each year.

Their collective work has resulted in an educational institution, an Armenian hearth, which is known throughout Europe for its unique features.

These people are still the heart of the school, the spirit of Djemaran, developing the school’s educational program, creating equilibrium, being a friend to the students and communicating with the parents.

In fact, when we set out to introduce Djemaran to a wider audience, we talked with people who have ensured its continued growth. Their live testimonials reflected their allegiance and dedication as founders, their scrupulous care, their anxious concern for the future and their philosophy of drawing strength from work. Djemaran is part of who they are.

*Since Djemaran has already proven itself successful in implementing the French official program, they channel their efforts into exploring and creating new educational methods to encourage Armenian speaking and to transmit a sense of Armenian identity based on values. This is the main focus of their goals now as revealed in this report.**



**What follows is a feature based on interviews done by telephone, e-mail, Skype or in person. Some of the interviewees have also sent written comments; they are quoted in their original phrasing.*

THE FIRST STEPS

The Hamazkayin Central Executive Board made the decision to establish the Marseille Djemaran in 1979. It was not easy to get a license to open a school in France. National laws and regulations should be studied and public opinion should be enlightened, as Hagop Balian, the first administrative principal of Djemaran recalled.



The old school building.

Acting upon the decision, board members Shavarsh Toriguian and Tzolag Tutelian arrived in Marseille to form a board, which was assigned the task of finding a suitable school place.

“For the sake of history, if nothing else, we need to talk not only about buildings, but also meanings and attitudes,” said Balian, recalling stories that give life to the bare decisions and facts and lend a surreal tone to the opening of Djemaran.

The Marseille Djemaran took its first steps in the most improbable place: a sweet factory. While the Hamazkayin Central Executive Board had planned to open the school in the fall of 1980, the board which was assigned the task of finding a suitable school place was already having doubts. “Along with a friend, we went to a real estate agency and told them that we were looking for a suitable school building. They probably just wanted to get rid of us, so

they offered a small, abandoned sweet factory in the Armenian neighborhood of Beaumont. It belonged to an old woman whose agent was an Armenian,” recalled Balian.

“It was a three story building with small rooms and a half ruined courtyard. I thought it could be renovated to accommodate the Kindergarten and perhaps the first elementary classes. That same evening we called a board meeting. There was a three legged chair in the middle of a room and a telephone on the floor.”

HAGOP BALIAN, first administrative principal of Marseille Djemaran



The first impression was positive. The Central Executive Board promised to provide the necessary funds for rent and other expenses; friends offered their support, and the project kicked off.

“Two students showed up on the first morning of the school year and two more showed up in the afternoon. The official inauguration took place a month later. We declared that the school would become a K-12 school. And it turned out that way,” continued Balian.

“There was no furniture. I visited an Armenian furniture seller near Marseille. He didn’t sell school desks and chairs and he didn’t know where I could find any. I told him that we needed a table and chairs for the meeting room. The next day he delivered a large table and a dozen of chairs. He donated them.”

However, school desks could be purchased from specific companies and only by public schools or private schools under contract with the government. “There was an Armenian man who owned a hairdressing school and had a contract with the government,” remembered Balian. “I called him, even though I didn’t know him. He lent us his membership card to make the purchase. We ordered desks and chairs for the kindergarten. The salesman was surprised and asked, what use were kindergarten desks and chairs to the hairdressing school? My answer was: “Mothers brought their children along”. When I wanted to pay, they said they would send the bill to the school. Afterwards the Armenian man said it would be his gift to Djemaran.”

Friends and strangers, recognizing the benefits of the school initiative, offered their unconditional help. “Humble people and professionals; they were the true builders of the new Hamazkayin Djemaran”, as Balian called them.

The Armenian owner of a food store in the city of Gap sponsored a student in Djemaran; an Armenian from Monaco donated a school bus; after visiting the school, an Armenian from Istanbul living in Paris sent a “substantial” amount of money every year; a former graduate of Nishan Palandjian Djemaran in Beirut, who produced wine 300km from Marseille and whose children were unaware of his Armenian identity, provided and personally delivered the wine for the school’s annual dinners over several years.

It was rare to find such people among Armenians, and it took time and effort to discover them. “Their unreserved collaboration and humble labor must be appreciated and morally rewarded one day, so that people do not think gratitude is not part of our national value system,” is what Balian wishes for.

NAVIGATING BETWEEN CONVICTION AND SKEPTICISM

The emergence of a school, where children would be taught Armenian at kindergarten level for the first time, was met with skepticism from the Marseille community. In Hagop Balian's words, "The Marseille Djemaran was a big adventure, but no one believed in it."

"Was it possible to have a bilingual school that provided high quality education and was accredited by the French government? Not that the idea of an Armenian school was not appealing in France, but parents did not trust it. How could they entrust their children to a school which had yet to exist? The Marseille Djemaran proved that it was possible to open a school, a contemporary school, which students are happy to attend and which will help them succeed in the exams. It would take years for people to realize it, to be finally convinced."

SETA BIBERIAN, Principal of Marseille Djemaran



In the early years, most parents who sent their children to Djemaran were not French born. Balian recalled: "We were having a serious conversation at a Marseille-born friend's house and he said: "The project of a school is very good; however, the newcomers should send their children first, and if it succeeded, locals could send their children as well." My response was: "Are you suggesting children of newcomers are laboratory mice?" Later on, his grandchild attended the school."



*Former principal
Loucine Malikian.
Teachers renovated the school
with their own hands.*

In fact, why would parents choose to send their children to Djemaran? Was Armenian education seen as an attractive option for French-Armenian parents? Was it a need? Or at the very least, parents should be made aware of the importance of ethnicity as a source of social identity and the need for children to learn Armenian.

Actually, there was adequate basis for faith in the importance of Armenian education. "Two French-born Armenian parents, who did not speak a word of Armenian, brought their child to school. A remarkable thing happened: they learned Armenian along with their child," remembered Balian.

"The need did exist in France," stated Seta Biberian, the principal of Marseille Djemaran, who was the educational director at the time. "At the end of the 1970s minorities began to demand recognition of their rights. A small percentage of third generation Armenians were having trouble finding their place in France; they were becoming increasingly aware of the need to learn their native language and culture that they had abandoned in order to identify and present themselves as French. As parents, they were looking for ways to transmit them."

Parents have played a crucial role in the early years of the school. "We owe it to that generation of parents for making the school what it is today," noted Biberian. "They entrusted their children to us, without having a clue whether or not the people who said the school would become a K-12 school, would actually succeed."

It took crazy dedication from a handful of people to set up the Marseille Djemaran. While the Hamazkayin Central Executive Board was providing financial assistance to the school, parents and teachers were building it hand in hand- in both the literal and figurative sense of the word. They were renovating the place with their own hands, transporting the children in their cars, preparing school meals if the need arose, "lightheartedly, faithfully, resolutely," as Biberian put it.

"A new grade level was added each year; children were progressing from one grade level to the next. The school was growing along with its students."

DJEMARAN MAKES THE COMMUNITY FEEL MORE ARMENIAN



The Marseille Djemaran is perched on a hill in Beaumont, which was settled by Armenians who built their homes, churches and cultural centres in the town. Today Beaumont is an affluent neighborhood near the heart of Marseille. As good citizens of the country, its people are proud of their Armenian heritage.

Around 80 thousand Armenians live in Marseille. They are more concentrated in this city compared to elsewhere in the country, which is one reason why it was considered a suitable place for the school. Subsequently, as Djemaran started to grow, so did the number of Armenians living in the vicinity of the school.

The main street across Djemaran is called 1915 April 24, and it leads to a monument dedicated to the Armenian Genocide. Walking down the street, it is very common to hear Armenian, while shops bear Armenian names, such as Sassoun, Ani, Massis.

"When Djemaran was opened, none of these shops existed and Armenian was not heard in the street," stated Sossé Manakian, the first Armenian teacher at Djemaran.

CHRONOLOGY OF MARSEILLE DJEMARAN (TIMELINE OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS)

- 1980:** The school begins with 4 kindergarten students, in a former factory building. By the end of the year, the number of students reaches 17.
- 1982:** Adds two more kindergarten classes and a first grade within 2 years.
- 1987:** Expands to sixth grade. Loucine Malikian from the staff of Nishan Palandjian Djemaran in Beirut joins the school as head of Armenian language teaching and co-principal.
- 1990:** Celebrates the 10th anniversary of its founding with a series of year-long events.
- 1991:** Expands, adding one high school grade each year.
- 1993:** Goes under contract with the state, whereby the French government accredits the school curriculum, which includes the national curriculum as well as the school's own Armenian curriculum. With this accreditation the government places classes under contract, one by one, each subsequent year and pays the teachers' salaries in terms of this contract.
- 1994:** 4 students make history as first graduates and receive baccalaureate degrees.
- 1996:** The number of students exceeds 250. A decision is made to construct a new school building. The Central Fundraising Committee is formed under the auspices of the Catholicosates of Echmiadzin and the House of Cilicia.
- 1997:** Karekin I Catholicos of All Armenians lays the foundation stone of the new building.
- 2002:** Following long negotiations, the Municipality of Marseille agrees to lease an area of 7400 sq m for a 99 year term and allows the construction of the school building with an area of 3300 sq m.
- 2003:** Students move from the prefabricated classrooms in the school garden to the new structure.
- 2008:** The Local Council of Bouche-du-Rhone allocates a sum of 1.350.000 euros in support of the construction of a sports and cultural complex for Djemaran.
- 2009:** The school inaugurates the "Souren and Sonia Sarkissian Intermediate Division" in gratitude for the donors' financial and moral support.
- 2011:** Construction starts on the sports and cultural complex covering an area of 2000 sq m.
- 2012:** The Marseille Djemaran has 345 students.
- 2013:** The construction of the theatre is expected to be completed.
- 2014:** The construction of the gymnasium is expected to be completed.



Playing on the old school grounds (1982)...



... And in the new schoolyard.



Kindergarten children today.



New graduates.

TOWARDS A NEW BUILDING



Djemaran had finally established itself as a K-12 school in 1994, when its academic plan was completed and the school produced its first graduates. Students working for years from temporary classrooms in the school garden were achieving a 100 percent success rate at the French Baccalaureate exams. The need for a new school building suitable for educating students had become urgent.

“During winter months children worked with gloves on, wore their hats and coats in class, while summer temperatures rose to 35 °C,” said Sossé Manakian, head of Armenian studies at Djemaran. “It is in these circumstances that Djemaran has fulfilled its role as an Armenian school, and parents have trusted the school.”

Balian provided a brief sketch of the painstaking efforts put forth: “The land adjacent to the school grounds was a deserted lot. It belonged to the municipality. We compiled documents to apply and submitted our request. They lingered over it. They did not say “no”. We pursued it. The Marseille Djemaran was built on that land.”

In response to efforts by Djemaran friends and school board members, the Municipality of Marseille agreed to lease to Hamazkayin an area of 7400 sq m for a 99 year term and allowed the construction of the school building with an area of 3300 sq m.

The Central Fundraising Committee was formed, following a gathering of Hamazkayin friends from all over Europe. During this gathering Souren and Sonia Sarkissian announced a donation of 100 thousand dollars, to serve as a catalyst for the construction of the school building.

“I love our native tongue, I speak the Urfa dialect,” said Souren Sarkissian, explaining the spontaneous incentive for his participation in the construction of the new Djemaran building.

“I realized that we should strongly support this school, housed in a modest building where it had developed and grown.”

Souren Sarkissian, a benefactor of Marseille Djemaran



Souren Sarkissian was assigned the task of forming a Building Executive Committee of experts. He mentioned the names of the persons who through their interactions, expertise and support have contributed to the construction of the modern school building.

It was thanks to the efforts of Sarhad Kilindjian and Gilbert Markoyan that the Municipality of Marseille allocated the land and the Regional and General Councils contributed financially to the construction of the school.

The Building Executive Committee headed by Souren Sarkissian included architects Trdat Apanian and Gravier Babigian from Paris, Hrair Ayvazian, an engineer, architects Varant Alexandrian and Meguerdich Yapoujian from Lebanon; with the help of Hourig Baghdasarian as assistant they prepared the architectural plan for the school building. 11 companies were invited to compete for the contract to build the school and the execution of the project was entrusted to the most efficient company.

Loans were used to speed up the construction process. By 2004 Djemaran had a capacity enrollment of 400 students.



The present school ...



... was built on this land.

The Marseille Djemaran has one main building which houses the kindergarten, elementary, intermediate and secondary departments. The school consists of 15 classrooms, 3 administration offices (the principal's, the secretary's and the board's offices), 2 laboratories, a library, a computer lab, a cafeteria, a kitchen and a parking.

A MODERN SPORTS AND CULTURAL COMPLEX

In the near future Djemaran will have its own sports and cultural complex, which will include an underground 785 sq m gymnasium and a 230 sq m 200 seat theatre. The project will cost 4 million euros. Fundraising started in 2008 and several events have been organized since then to finance the construction.

“We hold steadfast in our determination despite difficulties and, once again, our utmost concern is for the welfare of our students,” said Djemaran board member Simon Manakian.

The theatre will serve not only the needs of the students, but also the Hamazkayin Courants d’Art cultural association which operates on the school premises. Once completed, the fully equipped theatre will compete with the best theatres in Marseille.

The gymnasium will house mainly a basketball field and will meet a major need: until now, students were left with no other choice but to use sports fields outside the school for training. It will also provide a venue for Homenetmen girls’ basketball teams.

The state of the art theatre and gymnasium will stand out from their surroundings. The board also plans to rent them out as income-producing property.



INCOME CHART

Tuition Fees	44.89 %
Government Allocations	32.58 %
Donations	21.53 %
Other	1 %

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

Kindergarten	75 students
Elementary	109 students
Intermediate	105 students
Secondary	56 students

OVERALL SUCCESS RATES*

Year	2011		2012		2013	
	Number	Rate %	Number	Rate %	Number	Rate %
Brevet	25	100 %	19	100 %	22	91 %
Baccalaureate	13	85 %	16	100 %	15	100 %

*In the last 7 years the success rate for the baccalaureate exams has been 97%.
16 students graduated from the Marseille Djemaran in 2012 and 15 in 2013.

UNDER CONTRACT WITH THE STATE

The French government places classes under contract, one by one, each subsequent year, thanks to the combined efforts of Djemaran administrators and board members. To get each class under contract is a major achievement for the school. The procedure is still in progress. Following a demand made 2 years ago, the government decided to place grade 11 under contract in 2013.

“This means that the official Djemaran curriculum is approved by the Ministry of Education and we are given the right to implement our own Armenian program,” explained the principal of Djemaran. “This means that our students are not deprived of any opportunity at Djemaran; they can go to another school without facing any difficulties, and they can take national exams. This is the moral side of it.”

“There is also an important financial aspect to it. As a private school Djemaran provides education to 345 students, thus relieving the burden of the government, which in turn offers its financial support to the school. It pays the teachers’ salaries in terms of our contract, as well as a given sum per student. Moreover, the school gets the right to appeal to the municipality, to the local and regional councils for support to meet academic and nonacademic needs.”

“However, not all teachers derive the same benefit from this contract. Teaching a second language to kindergarten and elementary school children does not form part of the French education system, at least not according to our standards. Therefore the school management has to pay the salaries of Armenian teachers. At the intermediate and secondary levels Armenian teachers are paid by the government only as much as foreign language (English, Spanish) teachers. That is, on the basis of 3 hours per week. Whereas Djemaran offers a significant number of class hours in Armenian language and Armenian history, which means the school pays for the additional hours.”

The Djemaran administrators are aware of the disadvantages associated with the contract which sometimes presents them with “subtle” situations. “We are not free to choose teachers or to fire them if we do not agree with their teaching methods. Sometimes we are even obliged to employ a teacher and face problems,” said Biberian.

A LONE “BILINGUAL” BATTLE

While “the founding of a bilingual Armenian school was a result of the emergence of a collective and individual awareness,” as Biberian stated, the accreditation of Marseille Djemaran as a bilingual school by the French government was a great accomplishment; this, together with the inclusion of the Armenian language in the official baccalaureate program as a first or second language, sharing equal status with other languages. It was a remarkable development. France is not a bilingual nation and has a limited tradition of bilingual education. “In this sense, Djemaran was an avant-garde educational institution,” said Biberian. “Other Armenian bilingual schools opened in the following years, and now the French educational system acknowledges the importance of bilingual schools.”

What was the purpose of the project? “There was just one Armenian school in Paris, which was an elementary and intermediate school. Others included kindergarten and elementary grades. This meant that 10 year old children were attending French schools,” explained Biberian. “Our goal was first to educate the whole child in a bicultural and bilingual environment, so that by the time students graduate they have a sense of their own identity, both as persons and as Armenians. Graduating from an Armenian school at 18 and not at 10 makes a difference.”

There was also a linguistic basis. “The earlier a second language is acquired, the more fluent a child will be in it,” explained Manakian.

“Our goal was to turn the Armenian Language into a mother tongue to a feasible extent,” added Biberian. “It was not the mother tongue of most Armenians; therefore, it should become the language of instruction at kindergarten level, where the main interaction takes place.”

From then on, each day brought a new challenge for the school. Having no source of inspiration and practical solutions, Djemaran educators had to rely on their own resources to meet the challenges of devising and trying a bilingual educational program.



“France is a monolingual country and does not readily accept foreign languages. Bilingual education programs do not make children bilingual. Neither the pedagogical context nor the atmosphere exists.”

SETA BIBERIAN

What the Marseille Djemaran has achieved over the years is the result of endless experimental work, with a handful of Armenian teachers, who confess that despite their persistent and creative efforts, it takes supernatural, almost magical powers to carry out bilingual education programs effectively in a French environment.



“If we take the idea of a bilingual school literally, then we have failed to achieve our goal,” noted Biberian. “Students in a bilingual school should master both the Armenian and French languages, subjects should be discussed both in Armenian and in French. However, the linguistic environment is not available for a second language acquisition in France.”

Manakian illustrated the idea vividly. “Bilingual education can succeed only in a bilingual atmosphere. That is, when the teaching staff and the educational environment are bilingual. When Djemaran was opened, the goal was to create a bilingual atmosphere in the school. Teachers should be able to speak Armenian and French. However, with the expansion of the school and the increase in the number of teachers, circumstances eventually led to Armenian being used to communicate with Armenian teachers only. Consequently the Armenian language fell into decline as a spoken language. Students would still be speaking Armenian if all subjects were taught by bilingual teachers; if the staff spoke Ar-

menian. Thus the use of the Armenian language was restricted unintentionally.”

“Our problem is that it is always tough to find bilingual teachers and employees,” explained Biberian. “If two applicants, an Armenian and a non-Armenian teacher with equal credentials apply to us, of course we choose the Armenian, especially if he or she speaks Armenian. But this rarely happens.”

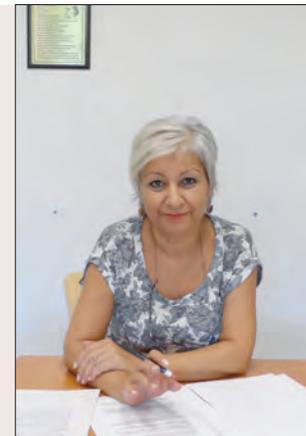
“SPEAKING THE ARMENIAN LANGUAGE IS NOT A SIMPLE MATTER”

The Djemaran educators give a down-to-earth analysis of why Armenian is not a language of daily use and why even Armenian speaking students speak French among themselves.

“Sometimes students themselves wonder why they do not speak Armenian to each other. Linguistic educators explain why: French is the language of the dominant culture around them, and it is a lingua franca. They say there should be motivating factors for a child to learn a language, such as love for the teacher, the need to conform to their peer group or to complete their identity and feel accepted by their social environment. The social impact is huge. Otherwise, from the scientific standpoint, children can learn multiple languages equally well, if they are exposed to these languages,” explained Manakian, who teaches at the intermediate and secondary levels.

“You must first hear a language before you can speak it. Yet, the importance of hearing the language being spoken does not end there. As children develop new interests and realize that the language they have learned is insufficient to meet their needs, they adopt the dominant language. Speaking the Armenian language is not a simple matter. It is not only about learning to speak Armenian. It is a well known fact that in order to master languages necessary for their chosen field of study, students spend some time in the countries where the languages concerned are spoken.”

SOSSÉ MANAKIAN, Head of Armenian Studies at Marseille Djemaran



When Djemaran was first opened, many families still had an Armenian-speaking grandparent living with them. “30 years later, when parents enroll their children at the school, I always ask if anyone in their household speaks Armenian, and the answer is generally “no,” pointed out Biberian. “We must be aware of the fact that for fifth generation French-Armenians the school is the only place where children can hear Armenian spoken, but back home, there are no relatives who can understand the lyrics of the Armenian song they learn. We don’t have the necessary relationships to keep the language alive outside of school.”

“It is quite difficult to understand why some people are surprised to find out, that after attending the school for 15 years students do not speak Armenian to each other. Is it possible to use Armenian as a common means of communication only by learning the language and speaking it in the classrooms?” asked Manakian. “There are several determining factors at play, such as the environment and language status. In an Armenian community like the one in Lebanon, children speak Armenian very naturally and spontaneously right from the start. They will continue to develop their language skills, fluency and knowledge in the school environment. However, even those Armenians who have not attended an Armenian school speak Armenian in Lebanon. Does the school put in any additional effort to turn students into Armenian speakers? This is not a question of knowledge and level of proficiency, but of using the language as a means of communication. So, we begin to get closer to linguistic and pedagogical approaches that take into account and analyze the human element and other factors. Speaking a language is part of human nature and acquiring it is a complicated procedure. It would not be sensible to take an ideological approach to this complex issue, and it cannot be dealt with in an amateurish way.”

“Methods in teaching Armenian are widely met with criticism. One cannot deny the truth in them. However, we may also ask: What kind of tools do we give to Armenian teachers? What tools does the Armenian teacher have? Has the issue been discussed in a broad context?”

Manakian urges to transcend futile criticism, to be in touch with reality, and to address the issue at a conference level, so that Armenian educational institutions in the Diaspora go beyond making arbitrary comparisons between teaching paradigms and set their standards in accordance with professional criteria, “which will naturally vary from community to community”, as she said.

“THE FOREIGN SPEAKING-ARMENIAN STATUS AS A THRESHOLD”

“It seems to me that this generation or this section of the generation can be Armenian despite speaking French as their first language,” wrote Haroutyun Kurkjian in a letter from Paris to Simon Vratzian, dated 21 December 1966 (Read the full excerpt on page 37). Would Kurkjian write the same today?

“Definitely; however, the statement concerning the French speaking generation is an affirmation of the fact and not an acceptance in the sense of compliance. Thus, the foreign speaking-Armenian status appears to be a threshold for the recovery of Armenian cultural identity”.

“On the other hand, the restoration of the sense of Armenian identity, especially in the diasporan communities of Western countries (And I am convinced, eventually for us the “Easterners” as well), must not be defined as embracing a ghetto identity in defiance of the local language and culture, but as a robust biculturalism, an authentic bilingualism. And I have confirmed that my perception is precisely in line with the perception of the Marseille Djemaran educators today.”

HAROUTYUN KURKJIAN

THE TRANSITION AT DJEMARAN: ARMENIAN REGAINS ITS VALUE

“The school should create a living environment for Armenian and should make it the language of the present,” said Seta Biberian, referring to the necessity of moving away from conventional methods and “breaking away from the notion that the school is a place where Armenian is preserved as a doomed language.”

“Even native Armenian-speaking children’s language is devalued when they attend a French school, since Armenian is used only as a home language and is not part of their social environment. Whereas, when native Armenian-speaking children attend an Armenian school, and interact with other environments that exist outside their family, they find a place for the language in the social context of their peer group, and the language is not devalued.”

“We compare the teaching of other languages and explore pedagogical methods of language teaching and learning. Unfortunately, we do not have a ready-made plan to follow. The tools available are not adequate for our needs. We have made great efforts to find ways to develop the students’ skills in oral expression, so that a new word is added to their vocabulary each day, so that they string two words together to make a sentence and gradually acquire knowledge of the language.”

SOSSÈ MANAKIAN

Kindergarten students spend half a day in Armenian and half a day in French. The elementary curriculum includes 5 classroom hours of Armenian per week. Students are taught one trimester each of the following subjects: Armenian language, Armenian history, science and math (in Armenian) at the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade levels. This approach helps to enrich the students’ vocabulary and to develop the ability to think in Armenian, also “to prevent the devaluation of the Armenian language against the French,” as Manakian explained.

“We try to strike a balance so that the two languages complement each other and can be used together as a pedagogical tool. Our French teachers know that French and Armenian are not independent from each other. They collaborate with Armenian teachers to impart or solidify knowledge.”

“A few years ago we drew comparisons between Armenian and French proverbs and painted them. This year we staged a play in which the characters spoke in proverbs.”

“Last year the study of two pieces from each art category for each trimester was introduced into the Intermediate Armenian Program.”

“On the other hand, secondary grade students took a year long course in theatre history and were engaged in theatre related activities. The purpose of such activities is to provide opportunities to speak Armenian and to show that learning Armenian is not only about learning subject matter or acquiring knowledge, but also about being able to play, to argue and to create in Armenian,” she added.

Teachers work together to adapt textbooks and instructional methods to meet the students’ interests and abilities. Garo Momjian’s Armenian History series for intermediate students and Roubina Peroomian’s Hay Tad (Armenian Question) series for secondary students are taught in a simplified way.

Haroutyun Kurkjian’s Armenian textbook series for intermediate and secondary students are taught using methods developed in collaboration with the author.

“After experimenting for two years, students are enjoying the texts they are reading and will write a two page analysis about any piece. It’s not that our students write flawless Armenian, it’s just that they are already capable of making comparisons. They say: This is written in the style of Zabel Yesayan,” said Manakian.

“Students choose to sit for the baccalaureate exams in Armenian because their level of Armenian is higher than that of the exams. This is a very important aspect for us, because Kurkjian’s textbook encourages students to work at a higher level. By some miracle, they not only delve into the subject matter, but also want to share it.”

SOSSÈ MANAKIAN

“The miracle” lies in the ability of the teacher to engage the students’ interest in the subject matter. And the result would be that this year, while preparing for their trial exams, baccalaureate students would organize A Reading Night open to the public: they would read 10 pieces from their textbook, staging their own theatrical table reading, along with music and analysis.

Biberian described it as “an aesthetic moment”. “And these were not simple texts. They read Oshagan, Totovents, Sevag and Bakunts...” she added.

“How do students read Dzarougian’s memoir, Mangoutyun Chounetzogh Martig (People without a Childhood)? Do they react as Armenians?” The question posed by Loucine Malikian, former principal of Marseille Djemaran, might sound skeptical considering the seriousness of such endeavors, but it is thought provoking nevertheless.

“The issue concerns literature in general,” reflected Biberian. “It gives us the opportunity to go beyond the narrow scope of the present time and space; to feel things we do not normally feel. There is no question of whether the students can do this. They certainly can, especially with their teacher’s help.”

For Manakian, the Armenian literature teacher, the key is enabling students to transcend superficiality, “to go beyond the subject matter; to relate it to the students’ world. We explain that literature is not only about what happened in the past, but it is also about issues that concern humanity and society today; it is not only Armenian, but universal as well. We usually succeed, and the students begin to express their opinion, to argue, to imagine the continuation of a story or a different end to it.”

Manakian believes that reading should not be limited to textbooks only. Each year she organizes a reading activity, using abridged versions of Armenian novels. “And a miracle happened,” she said. “A student read the first books in the Zartok series [unabridged]. This is a very rare case, but it did happen.”

“METHOD NEXT TO VITALITY”

All over the Diaspora there are several obstacles to teaching Armenian language and literature. Is it possible for Djemaran educators to teach Armenian and encourage students to love the language by using existing models as a template? Or should they develop their own model?

Haroutyun Kurkjian was appointed advisor on Armenian education to the Marseille Djemaran by the Hamazkayin Central Executive Board. He is the author of the Armenian textbooks that are used in the school and has collaborated with Djemaran teachers to develop ways of making his textbooks more effective for learners. For the last two years Kurkjian has been monitoring the application of the methods outlined and believes that “teachers should aim to meet the dual imperatives of method and vitality: both to teach Armenian, and to encourage students to love the language. That is, they should not confine language to a strict set of rules, but should introduce it as a real-live communication tool; teach it in a natural way; use it as a medium to express life. However, this cannot be achieved without vision or by an impromptu approach. Teachers need to develop an instructional plan for each lesson in advance, using the appropriate pedagogy. Hence method is required next to vitality.”

“Armenian, being one of the myriad languages on this planet, is naturally subject to these psychological-pedagogical standards and general approaches. Thus, there is no need to create our own new model,” he noted.



“Of course we have our distinctive way of doing things. In the process of making Armenian a vital instrument of communication in daily life, we must ensure that our instruction and textbooks mirror Armenian life both in Armenia and the Diaspora, tailored to each age group, without ever ignoring the precondition of creating vitality and engaging the students’ interest.”

HAROUTYUN KURKJIAN, advisor on Armenian education to the Marseille Djemaran

However, teachers might need to experiment with several options to determine the most effective method. Kurkjian reminded of the dangers to avoid: “To give too much emphasis to factual knowledge, particularly grammatical or literary knowledge; on the other hand, to be careful not to make a fetish out of learning technologies. They must be given their due place, but they should not be viewed as magical devices. The human relationship between teacher and student, the student’s interaction inside and outside the classroom, these are the indispensable factors. And the neglect of these factors will account for the inevitable failure of the educational process.”

Kurkjian lends his experience as an educator “and advisor to teachers on their own instructional plans, teaching methods and the textbooks they use. And this, based on my belief in the vital role of the teachers in providing instructional leadership; also out of respect for their prior experience and greater knowledge of the educational and cultural conditions in the country,” as he stated.

How do teachers in the school adapt Armenian textbooks in order to address the students’ needs in the given circumstances?

“Armenian textbooks that are used in the Middle East are being used by the Marseille Djemaran since years. Of course we wish our textbooks were more suited to conditions in the West, not to compromise the quality of education in any way, but to use more appropriate methods, eager to achieve better results,” explained Kurkjian.

“The textbook series used at the intermediate and secondary levels are Hayreni Aghpyur (Native Source) and Hay Giank yev Kraganoutyun (Armenian Life and Literature) with their Specific Instructional Guidelines for Less Armenian Speaking Areas. They offer teachers more accessible versions of the already adapted texts; also text-based exercises that encourage students to use the language spontaneously- to speak it on their own or to each other, as well as further activities, such as stimulating contests, that extend the topics in the books to the students’ daily lives.”

“And the teachers successfully make use of the motivational quality of the instructional material to create a vitality that is sometimes hard to find in predominantly Armenian speaking areas,” noted Kurkjian, holding the school and the work of the staff in high regard. “A structured, well-thought -out method is the golden key to success.”

PROJECTS TO ENHANCE THE USE OF ARMENIAN AS A SPOKEN LANGUAGE

- Restore the Armenian library, replenish the shelves with new books, provide digital cataloging and classification to help students do research.
- Create an amateur radio station for students to broadcast their own Armenian programs.
- Subscribe to TV channels broadcasting programming in Western Armenian and install TV sets, to make students listen to Armenian programs and talk in Armenian about what they have heard.
- Arrange school trips to Armenian communities in different countries, to Armenia and Artzakh, to combine classroom knowledge with real life experience.
- Offer summer workshops, conducted exclusively in Armenian, to give students the opportunity to spend their vacation in an Armenian atmosphere.
- Integrate theatre into the school curriculum; form a choir.

“These should be part of a comprehensive plan. However, we always face manpower shortage and budget issues,” said Sossé Manakian. “The school cannot hope for outside help because people look up to Djemaran. Armenian institutions ask our Armenian speaking students for help.”

AN UNPRECEDENTED EXPERIMENT ARMENIAN CLASSES ARE DIVIDED INTO LEVELS OF APTITUDE

A team of just five Armenian teachers headed by Sossè Manakian implement the Marseille Djemaran's Armenian program. Probably Djemaran is the only school in the Diaspora, where Armenian teachers teach at three different learning levels from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

Two years ago Djemaran took a bold step in dividing Armenian language classes into levels of aptitude, to ease the shortage of qualified Western Armenian teachers and educators, as well as to provide more effective instruction for Armenian language learners.

"We had been facing difficulties in dealing with different language levels within the same classroom for years. We had to develop tools and methods to assess the students' level of knowledge and ability. We designed new ways of assessing the students' skills, such as their ability to understand and express themselves, and we divided Armenian classes into three levels."

SOSSE MANAKIAN

Language instruction according to level rather than grade, based on the common European standards, is used only in secondary schools across France and at the same grade levels. Djemaran has only one class for each grade level; therefore, it has adapted the model to meet the needs of the school. Its administrators offer three class levels for students at the elementary, intermediate and secondary levels.



"The same subject matter is taught in all three class levels for educational purposes; we provide all students with the same grammatical and linguistic knowledge, but in different amounts. We assume that one day a student who is placed at the third level will move on to the second level and from the second level to the first. The possibility of moving from one level to the next within the same scholastic year is not ruled out. This does not mean that we have solved the language-level problem for good, it means that we have found a method that gives good results," said Manakian, who leads the development of the system.

This is a whole new way of teaching and learning Armenian at Djemaran. Students, parents and teachers alike are happy with the results.

"Students in different level groups started to help and encourage each other. When the first level group produces some interesting work, students present it to the other level groups and vice versa. They have also developed a sense of belonging to their group."

Clear differences are identified between the three level groups.

"Students in the first level groups speak good Armenian. Sometimes they use French words; however, their dominant language is Armenian. Students in the second level groups mix the languages. As to students in the third level groups, we must continually look for and create different ways of learning and using the language. Our objectives are to encourage natural, spontaneous and fluent self-expression in the language, so that in time it finds its way, develops and becomes a communication tool among students," explained Manakian.

Does attending Djemaran from kindergarten through secondary make a difference? Does it affect the likelihood of belonging to the first level groups?

"Not necessarily," answered Manakian. "Students who have attended Djemaran since kindergarten also belong to the second level groups, albeit they have much better Armenian proficiency than their peers who come from varied backgrounds and who have not had the opportunity to attend an Armenian school. Estimates are not easy to make. We can certainly say that some students are fluent in spoken Armenian; others understand the language very well, but struggle to speak it. However, all our students are able to read and write in Armenian."

"THE ONLY SOLUTION"

Perhaps it is possible to select students who are high achievers in Armenian, encourage them to choose a career in education and benefit from their close relationship with Djemaran?

It was more a question rather than a suggestion; but it was the "only solution", as the Djemaran educators put it. They seek to prepare future Armenian teachers for the Marseille Djemaran, looking for potential candidates among their students. However, they regret that the teaching profession does not enjoy much respect in France, while Armenian teachers are greatly underestimated. Evidently, teaching does not provide the new generation with a promising future and an attractive career opportunity.

The Djemaran educators find it necessary to consolidate the school's education policy "to ensure that the basic principles take hold".

"Otherwise, how will the school continue to run effectively, and on what basis?" wondered Manakian. "It has already proven itself successful in implementing the French official program. A solid background is needed to ensure the long term existence of the school. Time flies, the foundations may shake, the Armenian program may be cast aside overnight. Djemaran should not be a school that teaches Armenian only a few hours a week."

"The reason for the existence of the school is its Armenian program. It is the essence of the school. And the Armenian teacher is the one who guarantees this program. If we do not value the Armenian teacher, then nothing else matters," stressed Biberian, emphasizing that the school's main challenge over the next few years is to turn it over to the "right people".

BEING ARMENIAN IS A WAY OF LIFE

What kind of Armenian experience does Djemaran seek to offer to French-Armenian students? How does the school bring about a real and major change in a student's life? The deeper question is: how to strike the proper balance between French and Armenian dual identities?

"The sense of Armenian belonging is affected by the background of each student. Having an Armenian mother and a French father, a student might not speak Armenian as a first language, but having a stronger sense of Armenian identity, might say that they feel more Armenian. On the other hand, a child of Armenian speaking parents might say that they feel more French than Armenian because they live in France; however such cases are rare in our school. On the contrary, even a French-born student reaches a point where he says: "I am not Mathieu, I am Mateos". This is an indication of the fact that the students are imbued with a sense of Armenian identity in our school, and that they are not indoctrinated," explained Manakian. "It would be wrong to attempt to set forth general principles for equilibrium between the Armenian identity and a foreign identity and to follow the same procedures everywhere to form new generations of Armenians in the Diaspora."

"The school teaches the same thing in the same way. The issue is how the students make it their own. They cannot decide to be Armenian, partly Armenian or French; but there is something in them that makes them say, "I am Armenian, or I am more French than Armenian". The school cannot determine this. If the students have a sense of a dual identity and can express or share either side of their identity in two different environments, then we can say that the school has fulfilled its mission."

SETA BIBERIAN

Manakian delved into the pedagogical influences: "When students realize that their Armenian teacher treats them as a person and cares deeply for their success as a person, they will feel at ease at school and will give everything in return; they will take the Armenian language more seriously; you can ask them to come to school even on holidays and work on Armenian projects. Whereas, if we treat Armenian as a separate subject, and assign it as a task to learn, then we will ruin the student's inner world. After all, the decision for the student to attend Djemaran is made by the parents and not by the student. We should act in such a way and we should create such a positive atmosphere that the decision becomes the student's own."

Obviously being Armenian is a way of life in Djemaran and the student learns its value. "Students are aware that if it were not for Djemaran, they would not be able to recognize their Armenian heritage. This is a major change in their lives."

Coming across the Armenian way of life, students also become familiar with contemporary issues related to Artzakh and Armenia, dramatic events in different Armenian communities and the Armenian Question (Hay Tad).

"Our students closely follow recognition campaigns for the Armenian Genocide in France. They demand justice; they are alert to denial and react on Facebook; they provide explanations to non-Armenian teachers," said Manakian. "It is true that this reflects the mood prevailing in the country; however, by discussing such issues we give the opportunity to the students to exchange their ideas about these topics. We believe that seeking justice is a human right; that we should be proud as a nation; that we should speak Armenian as a means to fight the policy of the Turkish state, and we promote these beliefs."

Kurkjian believes that when teaching does not become "tiresome and incomprehensible lecturing", then it will be possible to delve into the analysis of the distinctive realities of the Diaspora and the problems that arise from them. "Students are far more sensitive and open to the "distinctive realities of the Diaspora" from early adolescence, and even more so, when these are presented in a way that is tailored to their real needs," he said.

Classes are taken on school trips to Armenia every year, where differences in Armenian language, culture and lifestyle "contribute to the creation of a complementary reality", as Manakian noted. She also stressed the importance of trips to large Armenian communities in the Diaspora, as part of the school curriculum, so that students are exposed to the Armenian world and their contact with the Armenian world is not limited to the school."

Considering the fact that there are Armenians from Armenia, Istanbul and Lebanon among French-Armenians, we may ask, what challenges does this diversity present for the teachers? Does it enrich or make it more difficult to convey the sense of Armenian belonging?

In Manakian's words Djemaran is a "laboratory" where the conflicts of a decade ago have become a thing of the past, giving way to an understanding of different mentalities and lifestyles. "There is no single Armenian identity. We know that we must use a different language with each. We explain the reason why Armenians from Istanbul do not have the standard Armenian surname suffix "ian", and students no longer say: "They are not Armenian", but they see it as part of our history. Students learn a lot from real situations," she said.

Djemaran's unique approach to teaching history and culture plays a vital role no doubt, "by embracing non-formal teaching methods," as Biberian stated.

"If knowledge of a historical event does not go beyond the mere facts of a history lesson, students will just learn it and move on. We must engage the students' interest, to ensure that the knowledge takes root," explained Manakian. "How do we engage the student's interest? Simply by bringing history to life; by encouraging students to participate, to explore, to present their work to other classes, to make a handicraft; to make history come alive."

STUDENTS REVIVE HOLIDAYS AND TRADITIONS



"Children enjoy Armenian events held in the school. Whenever students in a particular grade work on an Armenian-themed project, students from other grades watch it or read it and they want to take part; they even run away to get a glimpse during forbidden hours," said Sossé Manakian, who views this aspect as evidence of Djemaran's success.

Thus the Legend of Vahagn comes to life in the dragons and fire made by students. A lesson titled Disaster on Ascension Day offers the opportunity to draw a lot and to share the tradition of Ascension Day with students from other grades. The Easter egg tapping is used as a way of introducing Armenian symbols. "Students usually decorate the eggs with Armenian symbols, without our suggestion", said Manakian.



Shrovetide.

long events. As in every year, students learned about the historical event through classwork; those in higher grades taught songs and dances to children in lower grades; wall newspapers were prepared and displayed; on the day of May 28 students, as well as Armenian and French teachers turned up with an Armenian symbol, and the celebrations kicked off at noon, with the Armenian tricolor flags flying everywhere.

"Thus French speakers, good Armenian speakers and average Armenian speakers uphold Armenian values through their work, and of course with the guidance of their teachers, but still with their own commitment and planning," concluded Manakian. "When students live the traditions and holidays, they absorb the cultural knowledge and concepts transmitted by the school."

"Usually students take home what they learn, and the Armenian education we impart reaches the parents indirectly," added Biberian.

Preparations for the celebration of the Battle of Avarayr lasted for a month in 2011. The students built a miniature replica of the battlefield complete with elephants, swords and military uniforms. They wrote wall newspapers, held a knowledge contest on the theme of Vartanantz; students of a certain grade level even composed a rap song.

Two years ago, on the occasion of April 24, students created a colorful map showing the occupied lands in Western Armenia on the entrance floor of the main school building. An exhibition put up by the students outlined a chronology of events, from the uprisings to the Genocide. A French reporter wrote about the display.

This year the school celebrated the anniversary of the first independence of the Republic of Armenia in week



GRADUATES EMBRACE THE VIBRANT SOUL OF “HAMAZKAYIN”*

Graduates wrote about their experience at Djemaran for this report, in response to a call on Facebook. Their testimonies (in French) reflect the powerful influence of the Armenian spirit of Djemaran.

“When I registered at Djemaran, I did not know any French. It was a relief to be able to speak Armenian with the teachers and it gave me the energy to get on with my day. Everyone knew me. The school guided me towards my future. Most of all it pointed out that one should be proud to be Armenian.”

Maral Isçi

“It was here at the school that I learned to speak Armenian. I became a member of the ARF Youth and Student Organizations in France. Other students from the school also participated in these organizations. I joined the ARF ranks. I was lucky to have had Mrs. Malikian as teacher and principal; an incredible woman, who always cared for the students. The most important thing Hamazkayin gave me is to think in Armenian and to live as an Armenian. And in turn, I hope to be able to pass on to my children the sense of Armenian belonging.”

Ichkhan Semerdjian

“I have attended the same school all my life. Armenians are committed to their identity and culture occupies an important place in this school. Words fail me to describe Hamazkayin. I hope the next generation will have the same luck as we had and receive the same things”.

Tamar Isçi

**The Marseille Djemaran Alumni Association was revitalized in 2012. This year it hosted its first Career Forum at Djemaran. Former graduates were invited to speak about their chosen career fields to students of grades 9 and 12. The Association aims to create networking opportunities between students, graduates and successful alumni- the latter may help other graduates find jobs; or may help students explore career options by watching people at work and getting hands-on experiences.*

STUDENTS ARE AWARE OF “HAMAZKAYIN’S” VISION

One summer day secondary students were invited by their Armenian teacher to write in our newsletter about their relationship with Djemaran. Some students wrote in Armenian, others in French. “This is the reality of our school,” explained Sossé Manakian, their teacher. Narek, who has a French mother and an Armenian father, feels Armenian and understands Armenian very well but finds it hard to express himself in Armenian. Madeleine and Takouhie, who have mastered Armenian, did not want him to feel isolated; therefore they chose to write in French. Sacha, who has a French father, Mathieu, who has Armenian parents and Anahid, who is Eastern Armenian write in fluent Armenian. (Their comments are faithfully reproduced in the Armenian issue of our newsletter). As the Djemaran educators have stated, the status of Armenian as a spoken language is variable due to the dominance of French culture.

“What is Hamazkayin? No, not a school, but a family that grows year by year, and where relationships strengthen day by day. Hamazkayin means studying together, living together and sharing. The school allows us to cultivate an interest in world affairs and to express our opinion. It conveys the Armenian traditions and culture of our forefathers. Some parents send their children to Hamazkayin because they never had the opportunity to learn Armenian.”

Narek Mahikian, Madeleine Odemis, Takouhie Mungan

“The Armenian language is not only a tool for communication, but it is also a means that brings Armenians together. Let us take as an example Hamazkayin, our school, where you can feel the Armenian atmosphere; and I think this atmosphere is created thanks to our Armenian teacher. The Hamazkayin School also taught us to respect the differences among Armenians and their cultural influences from other countries where they have lived. Thus Armenians from Lebanon, Syria and Turkey live with each other now. That is a real treasure. And finally to those who think the Armenian language is endangered, we say the solution is to register their children at Hamazkayin.”

Sacha Vaytet, Mathieu Tashan

“We are surrounded by teachers who know us. Parents can drop their children at the Hamazkayin School and feel at ease knowing that they are in a safe environment. The Hamazkayin School constantly reminds us that we are Armenians and that we have our duties. This school also has advantages for non-Armenian students, who can learn not only the Armenian language and culture, but can also participate in community activities.”

Anahid Agopian

“LOUCINE MALIKIAN MADE THE STONES SPEAK IN ARMENIAN”



Loucine Malikian, the former principal of Marseille Djemaran welcomes Karekin I Catholicos of All Armenians in January 1997, visiting the school to lay the foundation stone of the new building.

our school for 20 years, or rather she reinvented the Armenian language with a rich set of documents, strips, maps and games made for young and old students, to teach the Armenian language, literature, history and civilization, turning Armenian into the beating heart of the school.”

SETA BIBERIAN

“Her name: Loucine

“Her surname: Malikian

“She is “Diguine Loucine” to all of us at the school ...

“Diguine Loucine is a major figure in the field of Armenian education in the Diaspora.

“She was the head of the Djemaran Kindergarten in Beirut, when she created a method of teaching Armenian known as: Pokrig Ani (Little Ani), and trained generations of teachers in the Middle East, who have nurtured the growth of the Armenian Diaspora. Her name resonates in the memories of admiring teachers from Beirut to Aleppo, Los Angeles, Sydney and Marseille...”

“She took on a new challenge in 1987, when she joined our fledgling school: teaching Armenian in the newly created college and later, in the high school, where she served as co-principal and principal, embodying the creed of L. Shant: “The teacher is a friend to the student”.

“Diguine Loucine taught Armenian in

“WE MAKE AN ARMENIAN OUT OF A NON-ARMENIAN”

Armenian identity based on ethnicity is not the exclusive preserve of Armenians in the Marseilles Djemaran, but it is integral to the atmosphere of the school and it is part of its daily life.

“We had two French-born teachers who taught French. One of the teachers easily adapted: he played and taught Armenian songs. We encouraged close cooperation between Armenian and French teachers, so that children acquire knowledge about the world through two languages, learn two languages naturally, and this by providing identical examples in both languages during classes,” said Hagop Balian. Thus Djemaran educators set out to integrate French-born teachers into the school atmosphere and to design a bilingual teaching method, which to this day is the pivot of Marseille Djemaran’s educational policy.

“I explain to a new French teacher that the primary reason for the existence of the school is its Armenian program. And today a class teacher of French origin motivates Armenian students to improve their Armenian proficiency,” said Biberian. “Sometimes French teachers do class work based on Armenian fairy tales translated into French. When a French teacher uses the epic of David of Sassoun as part of a lesson, the student realizes that David of Sassoun is part of world culture and values it.”

A few years ago, during the year of Armenia in France, Djemaran was a centre for Armenian events in Marseille. Teachers from 12 French schools were introduced to aspects of Armenian literature, music and art in Djemaran, and in turn, they transmitted them to their students. In the context of Armenian events the fairy tale of Anahit was translated and published in French.

The Djemaran educators always try to make associations between Armenian and other subjects. This year the French math teacher collaborated with a French-Armenian mathematician, who introduced the 7th century Armenian mathematician Anania of Shirak to 8th grade students. On another note, the French history teacher is involved in making connections between general history and Armenian history as part of the French Ministry of Education’s official history program.

Armenian is obligatory for foreign students at Djemaran, who make up 5 percent of the total number of students. But why would French parents elect to send their children to Djemaran? “First, because they would like their children to attend a school in their own neighborhood, a school that is safe and provides a good standard of education; and second, not all parents would choose our school, but only those who believe that exposure to another language and culture is an advantage,” said Biberian.

The presence of foreign students also helps enhance the sense of Armenian identity. “Students realize that their ethnic language, history and culture in France are values they share with others; they are not exclusive to us and thus they take on a universal value,” said Biberian. “Even those Armenian students whose sense of Armenian identity is less strong than their sense of French identity, will come to realize that they are not really French, that they are more Armenian than French,” added Manakian.

“Actually it is we who make an Armenian out of a foreign student by teaching them our culture,” said Biberian.

She gave the example of a French-born student, who had demanded an explanation from the French teacher as to why the Armenian Genocide was not mentioned in the general history textbook. While in kindergarten French-born children often want to be identified by Armenian names. They go home and tell their parents: “I am telling you, I am Armenian.”

A WINDOW ON CULTURE



Djemaran is not only a place to teach and learn, but it also serves as a cultural and arts centre. It continues to provide Armenian education and upbringing outside school hours, through extracurricular activities, such as song, dance, theatre and painting. Students, parents, teachers, as well as community members interested in culture attend literary evenings held at the school. (Some of these literary events are organized in collaboration with Parenthèse- a publishing house that translates Armenian works into French).

“Which is natural, and not only for the benefit of the students,” said Biberian. “The notion of language for the sake of language and culture for the sake of culture is useless. We must be alert to what is going on around us.” And she counted the main literary events of the last two years:

Takouhi Tovmasian, a writer from Istanbul presented the French translation of her Culinary Memoirs of Bosphorus (*Mémoires culinaires du Bosphore*).

Robert Der Merguerian, an Armenian-French linguist presented his self-teaching textbook for learning Armenian: Practical Handbook of Modern Armenian: Comparative Study between Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian (*Manuel pratique d'arménien moderne: étude comparative entre arménien occidental et arménien oriental*).

Martin Melkonian, an Armenian-French writer discussed Zabel Yesayan's novel My Soul Exiled from a contemporary perspective.

Krikor Bledian presented the French version of his novel Thresholds (*Seuils*); students presented a bilingual staged reading of excerpts.

“Thus literature comes alive for students. They realize that Armenian literature is not just about the work of dead writers,” said Sossé Manakian. “It is not only a reality of the past, but also includes living authors. Literature comes alive for students when they share it and take part in readings.”

Djemaran students have joined the **Cilicia Dance Group** of the Hamazkayin Courants d'Art cultural association which operates on the school premises. They also learn how to play Armenian traditional instruments at Courants d'Art. The dance group is occasionally invited to perform at folk dance festivals and cultural events in different parts of France.

Djemaran also has its own theatre groups, which primarily serve as part of the language learning process to promote fluency in Armenian. This year Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was performed by children in lower grade levels, while Comrade Panchoonie was staged by students in higher grade levels (parents were invited to this internal event).

“Our students learn theatrical skills early on; they love to be engaged in theatre related activities,” said Manakian. “We use drama and theatre as a way to support learning in the classroom. A certain grade level puts on a short play in the classroom and presents it to other classes. We write a play based on a story in a textbook and we stage it. Sometimes students imagine and write a sequel to a play. Such activities help students to develop fluency and expression and give the opportunity to speak Armenian with each other.”



TESTIMONIALS OF FRENCH-ARMENIAN INTELLECTUALS* (SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR THIS NEWSLETTER)

“A genuine Armenian oasis, where the Armenian spirit lives and breathes, Hamazkayin itself is an Armenian environment with a dedicated and diligent teaching staff transmitting the finest and everlasting values of Armenian national identity, that of language, history and culture to hundreds of students. These students are the true inheritors of our national treasures and they proudly say they are Armenian.”

“The Hamazkayin school has justified the hopes we had placed in it. Every year for twenty years, upon receiving their graduate degrees, more than a dozen students join the community as full members, imbued with the Armenian spirit. They are to ensure the perpetuity of our Armenian national values in the French Armenian community.”

“Would it be an exaggeration to say that among the young in Marseille, those who master the Armenian language and who have had an Armenian upbringing would be graduates of Hamazkayin only?”

“It is the only academic institution in France that truly contributes to the hugely important task of preserving Armenian identity in the Diaspora.”

ROBERT DER MERGUERIAN,

founding professor of the Chair of Armenian Studies at Aix-Marseille University

“A unique bilingual school... Since its foundation the Hamazkayin School has brilliantly played a pioneering role in this field. A staff of dedicated and capable teachers, with the support of an active board, always seeks new ways to improve pedagogical methods to meet the various needs of the students... A recent new initiative was the introduction of student assessment checklists. The staff has also successfully implemented a project whereby Armenian language classes are divided into levels of aptitude, which is an unprecedented and promising move.”

“The Marseille school of Hamazkayin offers a variety of programs that help to prepare students for their future careers in France, at the same time providing them the means to be at ease with their Armenian identity in the country.”

DR. ANAHID DONABEDIAN,

professor and chair of the Armenian Department at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO) in Paris

“I will gladly state that the school is one of the rare places in Western Europe, where not only the acquisition but also the transmission of our language and culture are achieved as much as possible. As such, it widely justifies the role assigned to it.”

KRIKOR BLEDIAN,

writer, literary critic, professor of the Armenian Department at INALCO

“The Hamazkayin school is not an ordinary educational institution. It is a small Armenian “community” itself in a cosmopolitan city of 800 thousand people... The school not only serves as a hangout and a place of peaceful coexistence for parents, teachers and a supportive leadership, but is also exposed to the city and its society under the guidance of a dynamic administrative leadership... responding to the needs of a community where Armenian is being used less and less frequently. It is an opening to the world, and through the transmission of Armenian language and memory, also the precondition for the survival of the French-Armenian community. At a moment when the Diaspora undergoes a transformation due to continuous emigration from Armenia and the decline of Armenian communities in the Middle East, the Hamazkayin school serves as a model which should be replicated in other French cities as well.”

ANAHID DER MINASIAN,

historian, honorary professor at the University of Sorbonne in Paris

“It is thanks to the Marseille school of Hamazkayin that around 300 young people, a section of the youth of the Armenian community in our city, connect with the treasures of Armenian language and culture daily. At the same time the school provides these young people with everything they need to meet the demands of the French educational system—I can judge by the baccalaureate exam results every year, which are significant. The students of Hamazkayin truly master the Armenian language; they develop a genuine love towards Armenia and Armenian culture. This is a truly daring achievement in the circumstances prevailing in diasporan communities of Western countries.”

PATRICK DONABEDIAN,

professor and chair of Armenian Studies at Aix-Marseille University

* (Abridged excerpts)

PYRAMID OF VALUES

Djemaran educators believe that “educational structures in the world and the current generation are at odds with each other, because the society students grow up in is out of tune with school demands,” as Manakian said. However, parents would still like to see guidelines laid out in a school policy framework, including vision, teaching approach and behavior. The guideline of Marseille Djemaran is based on human values and prioritizes the child.

The importance given to the Armenian language is the core of the school’s education policy. Due to limited space availability, and following this policy, the administration offers priority to those applicants who have siblings at Djemaran or whose parents are Djemaran graduates.



“I meet each parent and try to make them aware of the fact that enrolling a child in a kindergarten program should not be an arbitrary decision, but one that should be thought out with the clear aim that the child will start and complete an educational journey with us; and that we rely on the support of parents to succeed. If parents are not interested in the knowledge of Armenian that their child acquires, then the child might ask: Why should I learn the Armenian language if it is of no value?”

SETA BIBERIAN

The second major educational approach, following the appreciation of the Armenian language, focuses on bridging the gap between high-performing and low-performing students. “We highly stress the importance of closely monitoring each child’s progress and finding ways to help students who have difficulties. All our efforts are directed towards encouraging students to strive and achieve their best,” said Manakian.

The belief that work is a value in itself is an essential part of the school’s ethics. “In this age of materialism and superficiality we live in a society where work is losing its value. Students think that success comes easy; the concept of working and toiling towards a goal is not part of their world. Everything is ready for them: they can get information from the Internet; parents try to give what they cannot afford; whereas they have to work at school. There is a contradiction between the two worlds,” explained Manakian. “School is now the place where we can practice cultivating basic human values.”

Indeed, this year Djemaran has adopted a new slogan: “I work not because I have problems, but because I want to avoid encountering problems.”

Djemaran students develop a broader awareness of rights and responsibilities through practical guidance. “Ultimately, the students are responsible for their actions. If they refuse to learn, to move forward and to become good human beings, we cannot coerce them,” said Manakian, emphasizing the importance of active participation by the students.

Respect is an important moral code of conduct to follow at Djemaran. Students must respect themselves, the elders and the young, they must respect their environment, property and nature, their history and the history of others, diversity (black students are accepted) and difference (the school has physically handicapped and autistic students).

“We struggle against racism and intolerance. As an ethnic minority in France, we encourage students to have an interest in minorities and to respect them. Armenians often forget that they are foreigners themselves and discriminate against foreigners. The French find it strange that we emphasize our Armenian heritage. We explain that it is not a matter of dislike for foreigners; it is just that we are afraid of losing our own identity. The very policy of assimilation leads to this kind of reaction in France. We must be very flexible and we must put things in the right perspective for our French teachers as well. We are a bridge between different mentalities and lifestyles, not necessarily to imply equilibrium, but to explain their basis,” she continued.

Manakian recounted an incident to illustrate her point: “Years ago a French teacher told me, “One of the students was disrespectful while we were talking and was not even looking me in the eye. I was surprised by this behavior”, I tried to explain that Armenian children have quite a different upbringing; when admonished or talked to by a teacher they do not look them in the eye. The French have a different standard; they take this as lack of respect. It is our role to explain and to make sure the two mindsets peacefully coexist in the school. Now they realize that an Armenian teacher can create better understanding even between parents and French teachers.”

The credibility of Armenian teachers provides a moral guarantee. Parents feel more at ease when they learn that there will be Armenian teachers accompanying their children on a school trip. “It was enough for me to say, “Your child is the apple of our eye”, for a wary parent to let his child participate in a school ski trip,” recalled Biberian.



“WE DO NOT SHARE THE TENDENCY TO HONOR ONLY THE BEST”



“All students, even the weak ones are endowed with positive attributes. It is up to the school to find and develop them. We do not share the tendency to honor only the best. We do not want to generate feelings of distinction and superiority. Thus, we do not give out awards,” said Sossé Manakian. “Students are evaluated on a quarterly basis taking into account such factors as academic performance, behavior and conduct. They are assessed by faculty using the following standards: acceptable, fairly good, good, very good and appreciable.”

“We do not judge students. We want them to know that even if they are punished it is for their own good. This enhances the warm family and humanistic atmosphere of the school; together we make a whole. The motivation to help is very strong among our students. A strong student helps a weak student; an older student helps a younger student. We must help each other and raise the standard of the school. This is part of who we are: To be a good Armenian you need to be a good human being first.”

“The evaluation of academic performance and behavioral conduct also involves the use of academic warning and probation. When students stray from the right path, we warn them, but most importantly we offer the help they need to correct their problem. If a student has the ability to learn but does not put forth any effort, he/she will be put on academic warning by the staff and the parents will be alerted to the situation. Students who are not making satisfactory progress will be placed on probation for one trimester. A student on a second academic probation will be at risk. A student placed on academic probation for the third consecutive trimester will be required to repeat the class.

Students who struggle with behavior and performance problems are closely monitored on the basis of a staff decision. A teacher reaches out to a student and offers help, the student accepts, and they set forth the terms and conditions for cooperation. The aim is to develop the student’s sense of responsibility. The teacher and the student meet once a week to discuss the situation. Teachers may provide assistance throughout the year, if needed.

When all efforts fail, the school gives students a last chance: parents, students and principal sign a contract which defines obligations to meet certain minimum standards.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT CHECKLISTS



At the beginning of the 2012 school year the Djemaran elementary report cards were replaced by student assessment checklists based on the French model. At the beginning of the 2013 school year similar assessment checklists will be designed for intermediate students.

The goal is to use the Armenian language in assessing the students’ skills and knowledge. No grades are assigned to this checklist. It serves to measure the students’ different abilities, such as self-reliance and commitment, language and communication, awareness of social and moral values, written and oral expression; and their knowledge in areas such as language proficiency, mathematics, science, development of artistic taste, physical exercise, etc.

“This pedagogical tool allows teachers to find out the skills and knowledge students have acquired, are in the process of acquiring or have not acquired. It also provides us with tangible data and practical means to revise our program and to keep track of the students’ progress,” explained Manakian. “Students often face the same difficulties

in both French and Armenian subjects. This checklist will enable us to identify whether students are having difficulty in understanding or the subject matter itself is difficult to understand, and it will help us find possible solutions to problems through parallel procedures.”

“Each student is a whole person. We should not judge them by their academic performance only, but also by their abilities. These standards are relatively new. While previously our approach was based on the overall evaluation of the student’s performance, now we can find out their weaknesses, see how much they have been able to learn and know what to expect from them,” added Biberian.

“We always try to make sure that the Armenian language does not lag behind the French language in any way,” stressed Manakian. “Both Armenian and French must be put on an equal footing in our pedagogical practices and in assessing the student.”

“THE GENERATIONS HELP US MOVE FORWARD”

“Sometimes easy situations put people into a state of idle calm. The situation has never been easy for us; therefore, we cannot be idle. Success urges us to continue and to strive for greater success. To go backward means death to a school. The generations help us move forward.”

Biberian’s words refer to the core of the teaching staff- members, who have often “learned from the students” and have led the school to success.

“The school’s success does not come with just a few years of work. The teaching staff works over the course of years to ensure that students succeed to the best of their abilities. Success rates are the result of collective efforts. If students fail the exams, we feel sorry for them because they will repeat the class when they should be continuing their education, and not for the school because it has failed to achieve a 100 percent success rate. In some schools low-achieving students are relegated to other tracks from Grade 9. If students fail to achieve a 100 percent success rate at the baccalaureate exams, it becomes a matter of honor for them. Djemaran cannot take such an elitist approach and perhaps this is just another kind of elitism”.

SETA BIBERIAN

In accordance with the National Curriculum requirements, Djemaran adheres to active teaching and learning methods which encourage the student to participate in the learning process rather than be a passive observer. Class sizes in Djemaran are kept to an average of 25-28 students at the intermediate level and about 18 at the secondary level, which is beneficial for stimulating the learning process and achieving higher outcomes. The arts are given a high priority in the school: students at the intermediate level make a presentation in front of the jury, and the grades obtained are included in the calculation of their official exam results. “This year Arshile Gorky and The Temple of Garni were among the subjects chosen,” noted Manakian, as another vivid testimony to the students’ interest in Armenian themes.

As for the use of technology-based instructional methods, Biberian believes that they should be used more extensively at the school, “however, this should be done with a thought out plan and not for the sake of using them”. “Sometimes students can be so creative with them, that they really surprise us,” she said.

The annual football tournament pits teachers against students and creates an exciting atmosphere. This is yet another illustration of the point that “The teacher is a friend to the student”. “Not by giving easy alternatives to the students, but by setting a goal and reaching it,” as Biberian stressed.

What is the secret to the school’s endurance? “Parents are aware that children have to change schools four times in France until they graduate, whereas at Djemaran they can move up through the four levels [from K-12], and can learn to be good human beings and good Armenians,” answered Biberian. “Djemaran graduates take with them fond memories of a lifetime together in a warm family atmosphere. And the bond continues today. We have 8th grade students whose parents and grandparents are graduates of Djemaran.”

Among those who have helped Djemaran become the success it is today, Biberian mentions the important role of the Hamazkayin Central Executive Board, “which supported the school in the most difficult times, even during the hardships of the Lebanese Civil War. This attitude heartened the French Armenian community and also impressed the French political leaders, who lend their help, once they realize that you are a force to be reckoned with.”

What goal does Djemaran strive to reach? “The school can have no other goal than turn all students into Armenian speakers, who can strike a balance between their identities and are good citizens; who are aware of the significance of the Diaspora and are committed to its welfare; who stand up for Armenia and demand justice. And of course, all this within the framework of human rights and values,” stated Manakian.

The Djemaran administrators see the future of the school in the continuation of the vision set by Hamazkayin. “The name of our school, “Hamazkayin”, is not a label; it carries a meaning and certain values, and we work accordingly,” concluded Manakian. “Work is useless without intention and thought. We live by these principles and we hope the new generations share the same sense of belonging to the Hamazkayin family; the same conviction and determination in shaping the future of the school.”

The Marseille Djemaran has been a rich testing ground for pedagogical approaches to Armenian education for more than 30 years now. And indeed, all over the Diaspora there is the challenge of addressing the urgency to promote Armenian speaking and to develop a sense of dual belonging. More than ever, it has become necessary to conduct scholarly research and analysis that explores, examines and develops the best educational alternatives; and it has become an imperative to prepare qualified teachers to ensure the effective application of the appropriate new methods, as well as the persistence of efforts in the area of Armenian education- the substantial output generated by ardent educators who deserve our gratitude.

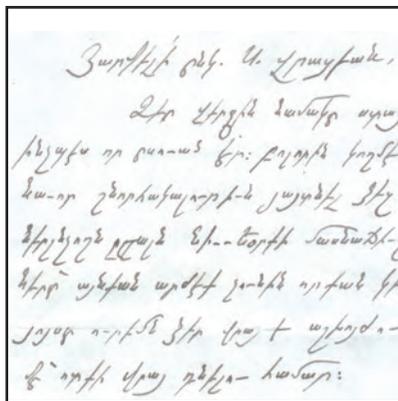
TIMELESS TRUTHS ECHOING FROM THE LIVING ARCHIVES OF THE PAST

They are a treasury of life, where experience and memory survive to take on a renewed meaning for generations to come.

Recently organized and sorted documents in the Hamazkayin archives often reveal anxious topics that shed valuable insight on a historically turbulent period when the Armenian Diaspora was taking shape.

The archives contain a rich collection of Simon Vratzian’s correspondence, the last Prime Minister of the First Republic of Armenia, author of Republic of Armenia, founder- editor of several periodicals, and principal of the Nis-han Palandjian Djemaran. A pivotal figure, a great public relations man and a proponent of scholarly standards, Vratzian received letters from all over the world.

An archive of letters belonging to Vratzian leaves us with words to reflect upon, especially today as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing and the literary Pakin’s achievements in encouraging talented Armenian writers; as we discuss the challenges facing Armenian education and upbringing in the Diaspora.

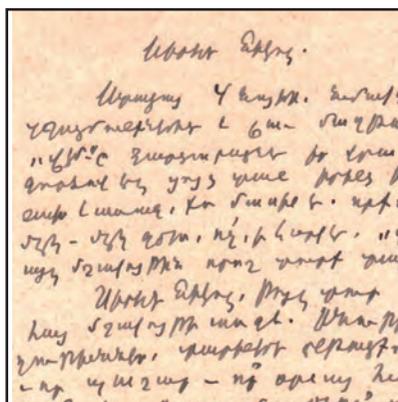


The Hayrenik (Fatherland) monthly periodical Simon Vratzian had founded in Boston provided fertile ground for a generation of intellectuals who aspired to appear in its pages in the first decades of the Diaspora. Vazken Shoushanian, a full member of the Society of Friends of Martyred Writers in Paris, in a letter addressed to Vratzian on 17 May 1930, expresses his wish to move to Boston and to work at Hayrenik. Particularly moving are the passages in which his longing to break free from a life of poverty overrides his desire for creativity:

“I would gladly come, if it is possible. Once yoked, discipline is the rule and it would be my obligation to be diligent in my work.”

“And we would finally escape, partly at least, our share of poverty we have seen for years. Constantly counting the money in your pocket, constantly thinking about tomorrow, about paying your rent, about the holes in your shoes, going to bed every night with the worry of your various debts in your

heart and always hesitating outside the restaurant door, is somewhat tiring in the end and perhaps demoralizing as well, when exceeding the limit.”



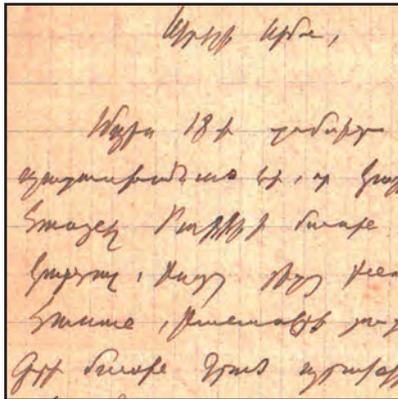
Simon Vratzian was the founding editor of the bimonthly periodical Vem (Foundation) based in Paris that ran from 1933-1939. It was a cultural and historical publication intending to promote scholarly thinking. Vratzian attempted to make it a forum for renowned Armenologists to reveal truths and insights and make use of them for the preservation of Armenian identity as a post-Genocide survival strategy he himself had set forth. On 25 November 1933 in answer to a congratulatory letter from Nigol Aghbalian, he asks him to contribute to the periodical. Rare is his affectionate approach:

“I hope Vem will justify the hopes pinned on it, if only fellow members show their good intentions by contributing with their work as well. I have you in mind when I am writing this; however busy you are, you should write once in a while, surely not to justify your receiving of Vem copies, but with the conscious awareness that you are paying a due to culture.”

“Dear Nigol, allow me to tell you that you are guilty towards the culture of the Armenian nation. Nature has endowed you with exceptional skills. You have accumulated a vast amount of valuable knowledge over the years. When are you going to use it all and what are you up to these days? Your every minute is needed for something else. The world will not come to an end if the accounts of Djemaran are not managed well or the letters are not written well; but culture will suffer greatly if you do not produce what nature and God have ordained for you, and only you, to produce. Much is expected from those who are gifted.. Nature has given you a lot; you do not have the right to remain silent.”

“I do not write these words to oblige you to contribute to Vem by all means. I am sure you would contribute even without that. No, I am conveying the general feeling and desire.”

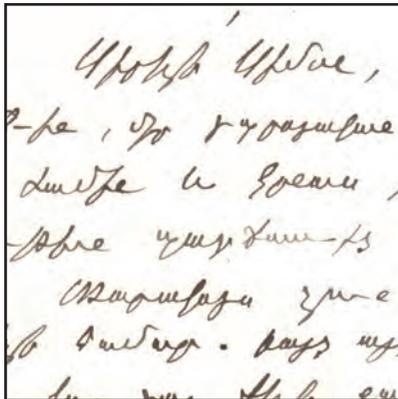
As an incentive to help him write, Vratzian sends “a copy of the latest translation of Omar Khayyam” and states: **“I beg you to review it for Vem. I cannot think of anyone else competent enough to write about it.”**



However, Nigol Aghbalian was living in a different world when Vem was being published. In 1930 Levon Shant had founded the Armenian Djemaran in Beirut, where Aghbalian was the educational director. On 12 October 1937 in a letter addressed to Vratzian, he writes:

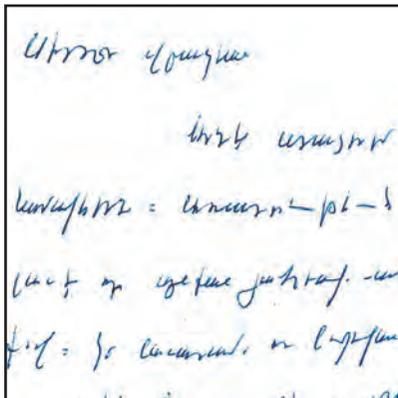
“I was hoping to work on something this summer, but life in a tent on top of a mountain would not provide the right conditions to write a letter, let alone an article. It is the start of a new year and we have new concerns-how to teach history of literature without books.”

*“Life in a tent on top of a mountain”...
Undated photograph:
from the Nigol Aghbalian archive.*



Moreover, there was a dire shortage of teachers in Djemaran. In a letter written on 3 June 1930 Levon Shant asks Vratzian to find Armenian teachers for **“Armenian and French languages, for mathematics and natural sciences”**. It was not a simple request.

“We need to find young fellow members who would like to be wholeheartedly and permanently engaged in our institution, who are Armenian in spirit, correct in character and rich in ideas. You see, my demand from you cannot be easily met.”

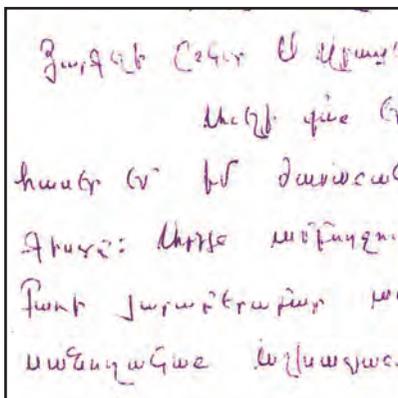


Running an Armenian school in the Diaspora acquired an aura of a heroic quest for those Armenians in exile, who were concerned about the loss of generations. Simon Vratzian was principal of Nishan Palandjian Djemaran, when he received a letter (undated, circa 1960s) from Hamasdegh. The author, living in the United States, expresses both his fascination and sorrow:

“I believe molding the spirit of young Armenian pupils fills the heart with great contentment, and especially witnessing a young kindergarten pupil, whose Santa Claus is Armenian and perhaps whose God also speaks Armenian.”

“Djemaran redeemed itself by occupying a special place in the interest of the Armenian nation.”

“The situation is very hopeless regarding the so-called “schools” here. There are no means or any solutions. It resembles milking the ox [doing the impossible]. We are losing this generation very quickly.”



The decline of the Armenian language and the assimilation of second generation Genocide survivors to the dominant culture around them had taken on a sense of urgency in the 1960s. Haroutyun Kurkjian, a graduate of Djemaran and now a literary critic, was studying in Paris and witnessing it all. At a time when speaking the Armenian language was a major badge of identity, in a letter addressed to Simon Vratzian on 21 December 1966, Kurkjian was putting forward an avant-garde point of view, which is extremely prevalent in today’s standards:

“I am closer to the “New Generation” [the ARF youth organization] who hold on to their Armenian identity with a strange fervor - and sometimes to the extreme, even if they do not speak Armenian or speak very little. I wonder what you think about this phenomenon, but it seems to me that this generation or this section of the generation can be Armenian despite speaking French as their first language. Of course, this does not prevent me from giv-

ing evening classes in Armenian, twice a week, to groups from the “New Generation” in Chavel and Issy-les-Moulineaux.

On 2 June 1967 in answer to Kurkjian’s letter, Vratzian keeps silent about the existential question he poses. Would Kurkjian write the same today? (You will find the answer in the Marseille Report on page 23).

IS THERE A RIFT BETWEEN THE ARMENIAN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE DIASPORA AND ARMENIAN YOUTH IF YES, WHAT ARE THE REASONS?



The question posed at the end of this newsletter seeks to open a new chapter to address some vital questions about common realities in the Diaspora, where issues relating to leadership formation and transition have become increasingly prevalent in Armenian organizations.

The term "Diaspora" itself is associated with a rift, the disruption of history and the constant emergence of new identities. Armenian organizations, which have been traditionally created to bridge the rift between the scattered Armenian communities and their collective memory in the Diaspora, are now faced with challenges to be able to continue with their mission and to pass it to the new generations.

There are no studies to date that explore the issue objectively and realistically. One can only speculate on the existence of a rift and the reasons for it, such as the new wave of the technological and consumer culture engulfing the world as well as the Armenian youth; caught between the contradictions of integration and preservation, the inclination of the new generations towards cosmopolitanism; the traditional (and sometimes archaic) ways of preserving the Armenian identity in the Diaspora; and all this in view of an independent

Armenia which by its sole existence gives rise to entirely new principles, paradigms and approaches to the survival of the nation and to the strategies of preserving the Armenian identity.

The Hamazkayin Central Executive Board has asked a number of Armenian cultural executives in the Diaspora to comment on the matter. What follows is a compilation of their thoughts.



*Readers are invited to join the debate
and to post their comments at: www.hamazkayin.com*



"Yes, there is a rift, and the main reason is what we call the generation gap. All other factors, that of vision, work approach and attitude stem from it. The key motivator of the older generation was commitment to organizational work. Committed to their ideals, they dedicated their time and volunteered their work. In today's fast moving world time is a major problem for the new generation. Even if they are willing to dedicate "the time they don't have", they would like to see their work appreciated and rewarded accordingly; thus replacing commitment with the pursuit of their career. The older generations have taken a more traditional approach, have held fast to their principles, and have attached more importance to form than content, whereas the new generations are intrinsically endowed with the power to build and to create anew. Equipped with the modern tools of today, they have a more dynamic, more resilient and more professional approach. As long as the generational transition process is ignored, the work and talents are lost. Therefore, it is important to listen to the new generation with unbiased ears and try to find common working ground. And this means making concessions."

VARANT ALEXANDRIAN;
member of Hamazkayin Central Executive Board



"The concept of the Diaspora is undergoing a fundamental change these days. Today's Diaspora, contrary to the classical one, is the result of completely different circumstances, and thus naturally it does not demonstrate a similar motivation for self-organization and the national-political will. Obviously, there is a missing linkage between the classical and modern Diaspora. Hence we are talking about the classical organizations of the Diaspora. Whether we agree or not, content and depth aside, speed, constant change and endless modernization are more than a question of style- they characterize the value based methodology of our times. Ideals and traditions are now considered obsolete; whereas those values have been the essence of our organizations. The whole issue resides in working with current methodologies to make the same value system attractive to the youth. Core values will not be compromised if our organizations choose to incorporate some of the present educational, environmental, civic, and youth issues in Armenia into their traditional patriotic objectives. There remains of course the matter of selecting the themes to be dealt with. The youth of Armenia are actively involved in such matters and have started to influence decision making processes. We should take all this into consideration in order to attract the youth."

SHAHAN KANDAHARIAN;
director of the Aztag newspaper in Lebanon



“Of course there is a rift. Living in a globalized world devoid of ideologies, the Armenian youth generally pursue more self-centered interests. They are driven by the desire to attain personal welfare first and then to enjoy the pleasures of a westernized and globalized culture. It should be noted that Armenian organizations, be it political, social or other, do not present an attractive image to the youth to make them involved in Armenian public life. In a sense, in its current state of affairs, Armenia is in the same situation. Young people resist the established structures and their practices; generally they are against anything coming from the system and the “establishment”. They want to see the introduction of new approaches, such as professionalism, transparency, respect of opinion, accountability- things that Armenian organizations lack in general. If the latter refuse to change their ways, the new generations will grow further apart from them, except, perhaps, if a political crisis erupts and new, more conscious leaderships emerge miraculously to engage the youth; at least those who are committed.”

MEGUERDITCH YAPOUJIAN;
member of Hamazkayin Central Executive Board



“We cannot confirm the existence of a rift between Armenian youth and Armenian organizations. However, it is not difficult to notice indifference and disbelief towards Armenian organizations operating in accordance with standard rules and approaches; and that could cause a rift. A significant percentage of young people feel that an organization's scope of activities and rules is too narrow for their wide range of interests.”

“This estrangement between Armenian organizations and the Armenian youth in the Diaspora also stems from the fact that due to objective and subjective reasons, we have not been able to create an enviable and a healthy environment for relationships, work and debate in tune with the needs of the present; an environment which is free and which also inspires commitment and awareness of Armenian national identity.”

“We are faced with this challenge.”

HAGOP HAVATIAN;
director of the Hamazkayin Vahe Sethian Printing House

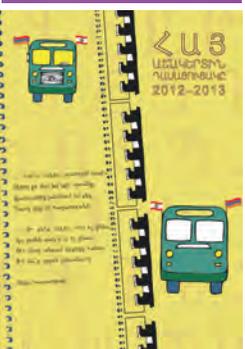
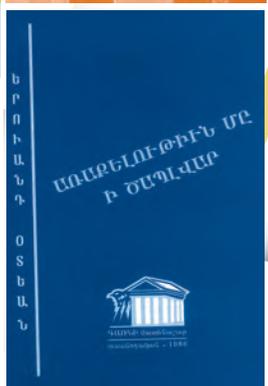
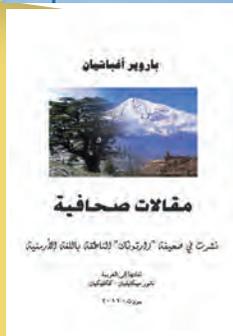
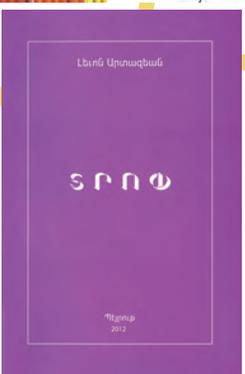
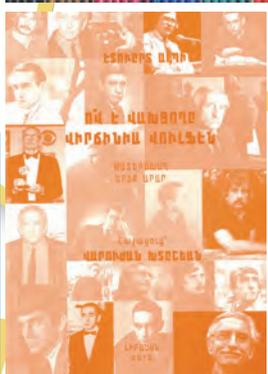
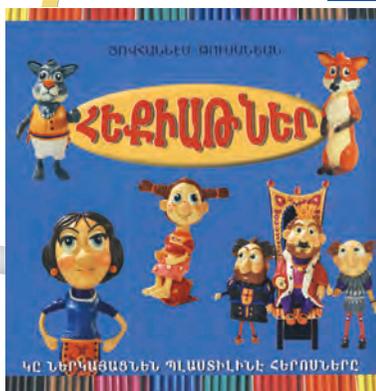
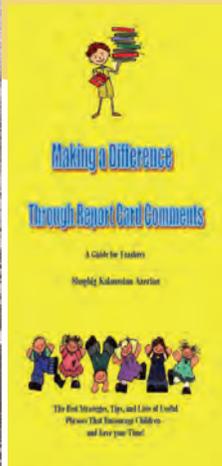
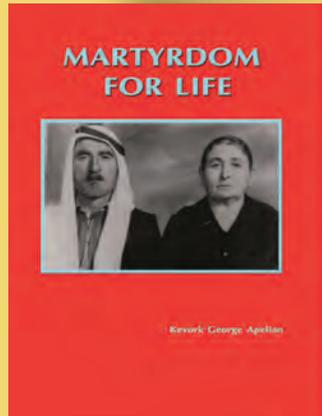


“Yes, there is a rift. Our people and leadership tend to look for the underlying causes of our own weaknesses and shortcomings in the outside world, but not within us. For example, in recent times we have pointed to globalization and modern technology in their various disguises as causes of our inherent disorganization and other problems. It is true that external factors may have an impact on internal functioning; however, in this case the problem is due to internal causes rather than external ones. The leaders of Armenian national organizations must first of all accept the existence of a rift between their organizations and the youth. We should be brought to the conviction that the leaders themselves are the main cause of this rift. The reality is that they are largely absent from our public life and do not respond to the demands of the day; they lack leadership skills, and this reflects on the attitudes of the people and the new generation.”

“Signs of decay within the organizations of the Diaspora are quite evident. Their work is patchy at best. They are barely able to fulfill our daily needs, and they operate without long term planning or addressing workforce issues. They are occasionally criticized. The leadership must take genuine criticism on board, which could be a first step towards progress, no doubt.”

“It is said that the rift between our organizations and the youth could be healed by modernizing our institutions. No matter how hard we try to modernize, there will be no change, as long as the old and the new leaderships take a rigid approach to governance. Hence, the imperative of avoiding a rift and any proposal or action that could bring an effective solution to the problem, presume first and foremost a change in attitudes, a breakdown of hardened values in mindsets and in the way of doing things. Time alone would not settle the issue, as we often expect it to do. We cannot leave the issue to chance. We must look for the underlying cause of most of our problems within our organizations. We hold the solutions to our problems within us.”

GARO HOVHANESSIAN;
director of Khatcher Kalousdian Centre for Pedagogical Formation



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