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In Memoriam: Aram Gharabekian

Posted By [Heghinar Melkom Melkopian](#) On January 15, 2014 @ 10:13 am In [Armenia](#), [Arts & Culture](#), [Featured Story](#), [Heghinar's Corner](#), [In Memoriam](#), [Latest](#), [Top Stories](#) | [4 Comments](#)



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Aram Gharabekian conducting at Zvartnots

BY HEGHINAR MELKOM MELKOMIAN

The man with a simple baton: but a great talent, who left an even greater legacy ...

This piece turned out to be the hardest writing challenge I have ever faced. How do you tell the story of someone who has touched so many lives, brought change, spread love both through music and by simply being exceptionally kind and modest; someone who has done more than can be written down in just a few lines. How do you talk about and refer to someone who is no longer with us in person, but whose legacy will always live on? How do you keep it short but intense, just like his life and career.

Aram Gharabekian was born and raised in an average working class family in 1955. The realization that music was much more than a hobby led him to study music and composition at the New England Conservatory in Boston. He continued his postgraduate studies in Musical Phenomenology at Mainz University, Germany. In Italy, his conducting guru was Franco Ferrara and at the tender age of 24, he became one of the few conducting pupils of the legendary Sergiu Celibidache in Germany. Gharabekian also studied composition and conducting under Jacob Druckman and Leonard Bernstein at Tanglewood Music Center in Massachusetts.

Music is not constrained by boundaries or time; it touches lives, shapes history, connects people and cultures and helps bring social change. A true bearer of this philosophy, throughout his career Maestro Gharabekian frequently performed at open air concerts to make classical music accessible to all, including the underserved communities.

He started his extraordinary journey by becoming the founder and conductor of the Boston SinfoNova Orchestra in 1983. The Orchestra excelled with performances in major American venues, including Carnegie Hall, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and Boston's Symphony Hall and Jordan Hall.

A guest appearance with the Ukrainian National Symphony Orchestra in 1991 changed his life and he became its Artistic Advisor and Conductor. "Following last Friday night's concert of the Ukrainian National Symphony in the Ukrainian Palace of Culture, we can attest to the fact that Armenian born American conductor Aram Gharabekian has transformed our orchestra to an unrecognizable musical standard", said Yuri Romazanov of the Kievsky Gazette.

Taking one challenge after the other he moved to his homeland Armenia, to become the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia in 1997. Under his directorship until the year 2010, he introduced a new face of classical music in the country by staging unforgettable performances. One such notable performance was when the audience showed up to find that there were no chairs for them and the concert began without any musicians on stage. The latter carried their instruments around with them, played while moving in and out of the crowd, and for the first time the musicians and the audience were on the same "stage", on the same level – all equal, all playing, all listening and all feeling.

He went on to undertake other challenges and with the launch of the Open Music Fest international music festival in 2009, he crushed many stereotypes in Armenia by mixing different genres, setting collaborations between artists from different cultures, taking classical music out of halls to open spaces, playing with the backdrop of historical sites and even adding a dash of fun to the performances by using children's musical instrument toys next to sturdy classical instruments.

In the words of Lane Crockett from Shreveport Times, "Gharabekian's conducting is not flashy, just solid and determined. His arms reach out and the orchestra obeys. He has good balance in that he not only can get the big dramatics, but also find the quieter subtleties in the works."

His work and efforts have not been in vain. Aram Gharabekian received numerous prestigious awards, including a special proclamation by the United States Congress, Armenia's Presidential Medal of Honor, the Lucien Wulsin Award, the ASCAP Award, a special diploma by the ECO-ETNO-FOLK Film Festival for the DVD of an open-air concert recorded at the ancient Garni temple in Armenia, and the Harvard Musical Association's Best Performance Award.

Throughout his tragically short career Gharabekian commissioned and premiered over 40 works of various composers. He mentored and taught music to young talents. He also earned accolades as guest-conductor of several orchestras in the United States, Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Switzerland, Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Georgia, Lebanon, and the UAE.

John Lanouette Brenner wrote in the Post-Gazette: "Aram Gharabekian has to be one of the finest young conductors on the scene today. To watch him control his ensemble is a joy in itself. He works with elegant flair and great dignity."

Besides being a talented musician, Aram Gharabekian was also a beloved son, brother, uncle and friend. Unfortunately many of you may not have had the privilege of knowing him personally. He was kind, caring and loving, always helping, supporting and inspiring others; a true role model. Today we grieve and commemorate his untimely death on a personal, national and international level; however, parallel to this we must not forget that in reality people like Aram Gharabekian never die. His legacy will live on for generations to come.

4 Comments

To "In Memoriam: Aram Gharabekian"

#1 Comment By [Antoine S. Terjanian](#) On January 16, 2014 @ 5:19 am

Thank you Haghinar for this eulogy on our great artist and patriot.

#2 Pingback By [В память об Араме Гарабекяне | Armenian Global Community](#) On January 21, 2014 @ 6:56 am

[...] HEGHINAR MELKOM MELKOMIAN — Asbarez.com © Перевод: Ксюша Отченко — Armenian Global Community (adsbygoogle = [...])

#3 Comment By [MM](#) On April 4, 2014 @ 11:59 pm

Maestro Aram Gharabekian left us too soon! Hardly had I have the chance to discover him thanks to Armenian TV, he had already left us :(
But as mentioned above "His legacy will live on for generations to come".
RIP Maestro.

#4 Comment By [Sirvart Garabedian](#) On September 18, 2014 @ 8:26 pm

My deepest condolences tois family, his quire group, to all Armenians who lost a legent so soon, we are saddened of his tragic loss. RIP

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