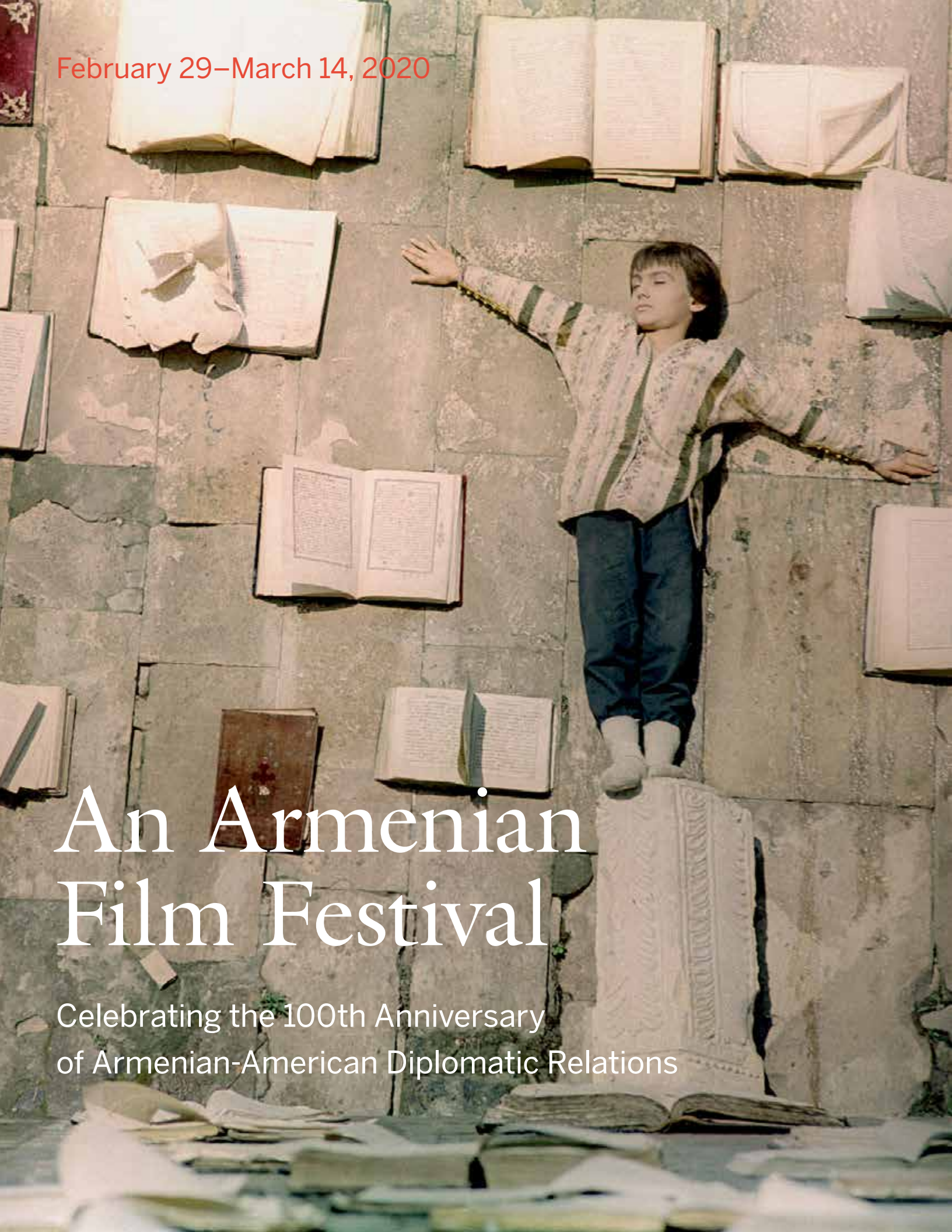

February 29–March 14, 2020

An Armenian Film Festival

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Armenian-American Diplomatic Relations

An Armenian Film Festival

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Armenian-American Diplomatic Relations

PRESENTED BY

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in collaboration with the National Gallery of Art

NATIONAL MUSEUM of ASIAN ART
Smithsonian
Freer Gallery of Art
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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART U. S. A.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

PostClassical Ensemble, the National Cinema Center of Armenia, and the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia

post classical ensemble
an experimental music laboratory

An Armenian Odyssey The Color of Pomegranates

A FESTIVAL PROGRAM COMPANION

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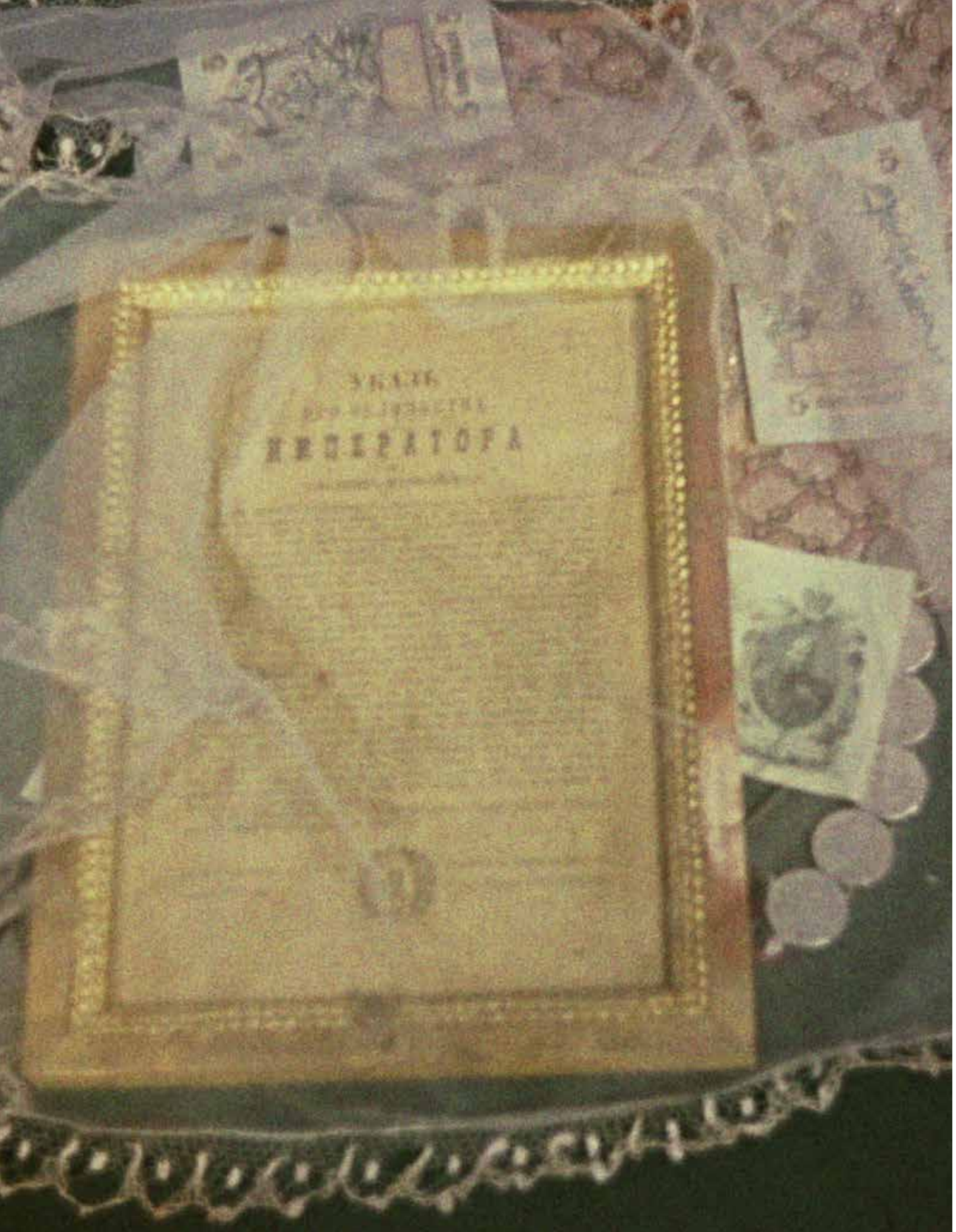

Letter from the Ambassador

Dear Friends,

Welcome to “An Armenian Odyssey.”

Our cultural festival—”An Armenian Odyssey: The Color of Pomegranates”—celebrates the one-hundredth anniversary of Armenian-American diplomatic relations, which continue to flourish thanks to our shared values and mutual efforts.

Our central event, on March 4, is a world premiere production at the Washington National Cathedral, undertaken in partnership with PostClassical Ensemble and featuring eminent Armenian musical and visual artists. We also present three film events and a concert, hosted by the National Gallery of Art, the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, and the Museum of the Bible.

Armenians have spent generations crossing borders to protect and defend our life and heritage. Crossings are often perilous. And yet our capacity to survive and build anew reveals abiding hope in God’s promise of renewal. Even genocide has not destroyed our capacity to find and cultivate beauty.

As attested by the essays in this booklet—extolling Sergei Parajanov, Aram Khachaturian, and Rouben Mamoulian—our leading creative artists have long understood the magic of cultural synthesis.

The pomegranate is a national Armenian symbol, known for its sweet taste and healing properties, for its crownlike top, and for its abundant seeds. To Armenians, the pomegranate represents fruitfulness and spiritual vitality. “The Color of Pomegranates” is our Armenian way of expressing appreciation for our deep bond with the United States and with the American people.

We are grateful for this opportunity to share our ancient and living culture.
Thank you for coming—and enjoy.

Varuzhan Nersesyan
Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States

Left: Film still from *Hakob Hovantanyan* (1967)

Schedule of Film Events

The Color of Pomegranates
Preceded by *Kiev Frescoes*

Saturday, February 29, at 1 pm
Freer Gallery of Art, Meyer Auditorium

Sergei Parajanov's masterpiece is a dreamlike kinetic pictograph based on the life and writings of the eighteenth-century Armenian poet and troubadour Sayat-Nova. Mingling tableaux, ritual, metaphor, music, and poetry, the film attempts to recount the poet's inner life while following his story from childhood through death, incorporating a tradition of Armenian miniature painting in the telling. The powerful imagery and expressive music aroused controversy when the film was first released in the USSR. (1969, subtitles, 75 minutes)

Preceding the feature is the US premiere of *Kiev Frescoes*, a restored short film by Parajanov composed of outtakes from an uncompleted film project. (1966, 13 minutes)

Commentary by Armenian Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan, Levon Abrahamian, Daniel Bird, Kevork Mourad, and Peter Rollberg

Four Acts for Syria
Followed by *Hakob Hovantanyan* and *Arabesques on the Pirosmani Theme*

Saturday, February 29, at 3:30 pm
Freer Gallery of Art, Meyer Auditorium

Making its US premiere is *Four Acts for Syria*, winner of Germany's Robert Bosch Stiftung prize. This animated film was created by Kevork Mourad with his film partner, Waref Abu Quba. As Mourad explains, "It is an homage to the country—Syria—that was home to three generations of my family, refugees of the Armenian genocide, and to the culture that has most inspired my art and aesthetic. It features a soundtrack by Kinan Azmeh and the Armenian a cappella trio Zulal, and a poem written and recited by Raed Wahesh." (2019, 14 minutes)

Following *Four Acts for Syria* is the US premiere of two restored shorts by Sergei Parajanov: *Hakob Hovantanyan* (1967, 10 minutes) on the nineteenth-century portrait painter Hovnatanyan, who was known as the "Raphael of Tiflis," and *Arabesques on the Pirosmani Theme* (1985, 21 minutes) on Georgian outsider artist Niko Pirosmani.

Total running time: 45 minutes

Commentary by Kevork Mourad, Daniel Bird, Peter Rollberg, and Levon Abrahamian

Zangezur: The Film Music of Aram Khachaturian
With additional film clips

Sunday, March 1, at 1 pm
Freer Gallery of Art, Meyer Auditorium

Known as the father of Armenian cinema, Hamo Bek-Nazaryan (1892–1965) stands with Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Dovzhenko in the history of cinema. A popular actor in pre-revolutionary Russian film, Bek-Nazaryan was a founder of Hayfilm (Armenfilm) in Yerevan. His vivid sound film *Zangezur*, created in the late 1930s, chronicles Armenia's civil war in the 1920s, depicting efforts by the Bolsheviks in the mountainous Zangezur region to defeat the Dashnaks, the counterrevolutionary rulers of the region. *Zangezur* was a trendsetter for Armenian revolutionary drama, and the soundtrack by Aram Khachaturian—Armenia's best-known composer—features folkloric songs, a march, and two beautifully lyrical interludes. (1938, subtitles, 89 minutes)

Commentary on Khachaturian by Peter Rollberg and Joseph Horowitz

Please note: The historical "realities" represented in *Zangezur* were shaped by the concurrent Soviet ideology of the 1930s.

A Tribute to Rouben Mamoulian
Love Me Tonight
Followed by excerpts from *Porgy and Bess*

Saturday, March 14, at 2 pm
National Gallery of Art, East Building Auditorium

An Armenian born in the Georgian capital of Tiflis, Rouben Mamoulian (1897–1987) trained at the Moscow Art Theater under Eugene Vakhtangov. Arriving in New York after stints in Paris and London, Mamoulian fashioned a newly integrated musical theater, directing a dramatized version of the novel *Porgy* and George Gershwin's operatic *Porgy and Bess*, followed by *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*. Mamoulian relentlessly experimented as a Hollywood film visionary, and his *Love Me Tonight* is a singular "musical film," a send-up of the film musicals of Ernst Lubitsch. With its Rodgers and Hart score, the delightful fantasy (starring Maurice Chevalier, Jeanette MacDonald, and Myrna Loy) uses lyrics to advance the storytelling, while camera shots and sounds together emphasize the beat. Joseph Horowitz discusses Mamoulian's career before the film. (1932, 104 minutes)

Commentary by Joseph Horowitz, Milena Oganesyan, and Kurt Jensen

See back cover for a full schedule of festival events.

Night Bird of Tarkovsky, Sergei Parajanov, 1987

The Art of Sergei Parajanov

An Interview with Levon Abrahamian

JOSEPH HOROWITZ

Sergei Parajanov—who was born in Tbilisi in 1924 and died in Yerevan in 1990—is widely considered one of the supreme masters of cinema, but his work is impossible to categorize. Original, inimitable, self-sufficient, his cinematic style was anathema to Soviet aesthetics. His nonconformity, exacerbated by eccentricities of lifestyle and behavior, led to persecution and imprisonment.

Levon Abrahamian is a distinguished Armenian ethnologist who knew and worked with Parajanov. The following interview was conducted in November 2019.

JH: How would you "place" Parajanov?

LA: Parajanov is representative of "poetic cinematography"—a direction beginning with the great Soviet director Alexander Dovzhenko—but I would add that he took this genre to a new level.

Some Americans identify Parajanov with *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1965), which won several international awards. That's a very dynamic film; everything is moving. But *The Color of Pomegranates* (1969) is quite another thing, and even stranger. The entire film consists of still shots. And each shot is a kind of artwork, a kind of painting, you could say. This was a new kind of cinema.

In fact, a book is being created treating *The Color of Pomegranates* as a collection of artworks. You couldn't do that with another film. Each shot encapsulates its own story, even if it is related to the next.

And Parajanov also created artworks independent of his films. Here is an example: *Night Bird of* Tarkovsky.

This collage is related to his time in jail. He is seen on the right, sitting with the great Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky, who was a major inspiration for Parajanov. Tarkovsky visited Parajanov in Tbilisi in 1982. He received an award for his film *Andrei Rublev*—so he has a medal hanging around his neck.

I was there in Tbilisi so I know from Parajanov himself what this artwork is about. As in fairy tales, we are watching to see on whose head a bird would land—as when choosing a king—and here the bird sat on the head of Tarkovsky.

And what about Parajanov? It's a sad thing: his hands are in chains, and the second bird sits on his chained hand. His fate is to be in prison, and the fate of Tarkovsky is to be a king of cinema. That was the original meaning.

But six years later Parajanov made an exposition in Yerevan. Tarkovsky had just died. Parajanov was in shock; he even dedicated one of the halls of the exposition to the memory of Tarkovsky. And now the same artwork became *Tarkovsky's Night Bird*—the bird that predicted his death. So you see that the story of a Parajanov collage could change without changing the collage.

Here's another Parajanov collage: *A Thief Will Never Become a Laundress* (page 9).

Parajanov told this story. He was in jail. The doll is Parajanov himself, hanging on a chain. And the title is a thief's proverb: once a thief, always a thief. The true artist will always remain an artist; he will never relinquish his inner freedom. The broom-straw related to an incident from Parajanov's prison life. He was given a broom and ordered to sweep the courtyard. But a film-maker did not make a good janitor, and he never will become a laundress. The prison warden complained that there was no spark—no fire—in the way he did his job. So Parajanov set the broom on fire to prove there was a spark. This was made in 1978, a year after he was released.

So you can see his artworks are also like films. He himself said that his collages were "pressed films."

In *The Color of Pomegranates*, you can extract stills, and they may be regarded as individual artworks. Here is a famous image from that film.

This is a dream that Sayat-Nova had in the monastery. It has a lot of meanings. Princess Anna is standing and Sayat-Nova is standing and between them is a llama. Higher up, the child Sayat-Nova and a surreal angel throw a golden ball. Then Princess Anna shoots and the child falls down. This happens twice. And then, suddenly, the black gown of the monk—of Sayat-Nova—becomes white.

Parajanov said, "Today we are shooting the nocturnal emissions of Sayat-Nova." His erotic dreams. He said it in a not polite way—but then the scene became very poetic, so beautiful that you forgot what was the kernel in it.

This "shooting" is also Freudian—to be shot in the heart, to fall in love. Besides that, you have shootings in various episodes in the film, always with Princess Anna as the shooter. And golden balls. These are poetic "rhymes," using repetition as you might in a poem, structurally. It is quite a new way of making cinema.

JH: Andrei Tarkovsky said of Parajanov: "He makes collages, dolls, hats, drawings, or something that you may call 'design.' There is much more to it: it is infinitely more talented and noble; it is real art. What is the secret of its beauty? The spontaneity. When an idea strikes him, he does not engage in planning, arranging, or estimating how to do it in the best possible way. There is no difference between an idea and its implementation; there is no time to lose anything between the cracks. The emotion that triggered creation turns into something finite without a single drop spilled. It gets through in its original pureness, spontaneity, and naivete."

LA: I agree. I also had this impression. In fact, Parajanov was creating his collages even when there were guests. And he had guests all the time in his house. His creativity was immediate—as if he was not thinking.

JH: On one level, *The Color of Pomegranates* narrates the life story of Saya-Nova, an iconic Armenian bard. What is his significance?

LA: He was a poet and troubadour of the eighteenth century, the court poet for King Heraclius of Georgia, in Tiflis. It is said that he was in love with Princess Anna and that is why he was exiled to the Haghpat Monastery. He died during the invasion of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, who destroyed Tiflis and Armenia as well.

What is remarkable about Sayat-Nova is that he wrote and sang in all three languages of Transcaucasia: Georgian, Armenian, and a Turkic dialect that later became known as Azerbaijani. That's the spectrum of what he was doing.

Parajanov actually became a new Sayat-Nova, even though he didn't know all these languages. He knew Georgian and Russian. He could only speak Armenian at a primitive level. But his three Transcaucasian films were actually shot in the three Transcaucasian republics: *The Color of Pomegranates* in Armenia, *The Legend of Suram Fortress* in Georgia, and *Ashik Kerib* in Azerbaijan.

JH: You've written that "the three languages in which Parajanov created moved apart with the collapse of that fragile Tower of Babel called Transcaucasia. Now the director, like his prototype before him, is receding from our lives, just as we have abandoned that festival of the human spirit which was his generous gift to all of us."

Right: *A Thief Will Never Become a Laundress*, Sergei Parajanov, 1978. Museum of Sergei Parajanov, Yerevan

Film still: *The Color of Pomegranates* (1969)

LA: In 1905 there were bloody conflicts between Armenians and Tartars (Azerbaijanis). There was even a war with Georgia just after Armenia gained independence in 1918. But during Soviet times the Transcaucasus became more stable, especially in Tbilisi, where the three major nationalities were all represented. And Tbilisi—Tiflis—was this poly-ethnic city where Sayat-Nova was creating his songs and images in three cultures. I can remember my own experiences during Soviet times. We were going to Tbilisi frequently. Even scientifically we had connections with Georgia and Azerbaijan. But after 1988 the three republics split apart; they became independent. And in Tbilisi some nationalist trends began. Tbilisi had always been like a carnival city. Now I don't see this. And a war broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia. At this very moment Parajanov had an exhibition in Yerevan and was shooting a film in Azerbaijan.

JH: It sounds very similar to what has happened in the Balkans.

LA: In the Balkans one country—Yugoslavia—was divided into parts when the USSR collapsed. There, too, was a post-Soviet wave of hatred.

JH: Parajanov first visited Armenia as an adult at the age of forty-two, when he shot *The Color of Pomegranates*. He called it "astounding: antiquity, purity, and grandeur."

LA: Parajanov visited Armenia as a young child—a visit he couldn't remember. He first went to Armenia as an adult in 1966 at the invitation of Armenfilm.

I witnessed times when Parajanov tried to be Armenian and suddenly became Georgian. And he would tease people by changing roles. Even so, he wanted to be Armenian and to be known as Armenian. In a Parajanov exhibit in Yerevan, preceding the current Parajanov Museum, he placed a collage that includes his aunt's graduation certificate, where she is named "Parajaniants," the Armenian way. He wanted to show people that he was Armenian. And he wanted the Parajanov Museum to be in Yerevan, which shocked some people in Georgia.

JH: Parajanov rather famously said, "I will revenge with love."

LA: After he was released from jail I met him in Moscow. He came for one reason—he wanted to thank Brezhnev for releasing him—but mainly he wanted to be allowed to go to Iran, because he liked Iranian art. He wasn't a dissident. He was always an artist first. He couldn't stop working, creating; that was the point. And the peak of that creativity for me is what he created in prison, where he had no materials. He picked some aluminum milk bottle caps, and with his nails he created "thalers"—reliefs—that are now in the Parajanov Museum. They show he could create under any conditions. When I myself feel I cannot work, I remember how Parajanov took scraps and made masterpieces.

"People think I will take revenge," he said. Instead he "took revenge with love."

JH: In closing, could you reflect on Parajanov the man?

LA: For me, knowing him was the greatest experience of my life. He was like a magician.

The first time I met him was during the shooting of *The Color of Pomegranates*. He was looking for bearded people, and I was a bearded student. He cast me as a monk. That's how I became acquainted with him. He was adored by all the crew.

As a man he was different from anyone else. A little hysterical, I can tell you. I was shocked that he could say bitter things to his best friend, the cameraman. I also saw him singing "Ave Maria" to some peasant children to encourage them and put them in the spirit of the film. At the same moment he was quarrelling with the crew and then winking at those of us who were standing and watching.

I decided at that time that I would certainly become a film director and work with him on his next film. So I prepared to change my profession. I was at that time a physicist, my first profession. Then he was arrested. And I became an anthropologist.

Parajanov, Sayat-Nova, and *Four Acts for Syria*

KEVORK MOURAD

I grew up in Aleppo and spent my childhood collecting the images and memories that would inform me as an artist. Elements of the ancient—the ornate doors and windows, the citadel presiding over the city—and the juxtapositions of old world and new—donkey-pulled carts piled high with watermelons, inching through streets cluttered with cars and crisscrossed with electric wires—created a particular sensibility that defined the artistic language I eventually developed.

When I left Syria to study art in Armenia, I discovered Sergei Parajanov and found much comfort in realizing that the direction I was taking as an artist had already been paved by such a master. Our similarities of vocabulary and sensitivity thrilled and inspired me. He is constantly thinking about time, infusing it with a sense of nostalgia. He preserves old images and ideas and makes them into precious objects or moments, for in the simplest object he will find poetry. These are all ideas that are part of my philosophy as an artist, as someone exploring the wealth of my heritage as a way to shape the present and future. When I rewatch Parajanov's films and admire the cinematic takes, the symbolic gestures, I realize how much of an imprint he has had on my own work.

Unsurprisingly, we have both found ourselves inspired by the same muse. Sayat-Nova was a troubadour in several cultures and languages—just as Parajanov was both Armenian and Georgian in the Soviet era, and I am an Armenian and Syrian American in just as bleak a time. Sayat-Nova embraced the various cultures in which he moved. His celebration of this cultural wealth, and his own crossing of borders, make us realize how far behind him our society of today has fallen.

In honoring both of these masters, by looking backward over two hundred years and then calibrating my attention to the slowness of measured time, I feel the thrill of being pushed forward toward societal ideals that all of us embrace.

My animated film *Four Acts for Syria* was created with my film partner, Waref Abu Quba, who left Syria when the war started. Many of my ideas were inspired by my grandparents' and parents' stories of living in a time in which Jews, Muslims, and Christians resided together in Syria: in Qameshli, in Aleppo, and in Damascus. Created with the support of the Robert Bosch Stiftung prize, my film pays homage to the country that was home to three generations of my family—refugees of the Armenian genocide—and to the culture that has most inspired my art and aesthetic. It explores the beauty and the recent tragedy that has defined this place, and it opens outward with hope for a reconstruction that honors the historical and cultural wealth of my homeland.

Khachaturian's Genius in Film

PETER ROLLBERG

All great Soviet composers worked in cinema: from Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich to Edison Denisov and Alfred Schnittke. They often formed enduring partnerships with one or several leading directors that would last over an entire career, as was the case with Shostakovich and Grigori Kozintsev. Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978) was no exception, with one caveat. While Prokofiev and Shostakovich are today widely known for their film scores, it remains little appreciated in the West that Khachaturian scored fifteen films, both feature and documentary, most of them in cooperation with the director Mikhail Romm. For Khachaturian, working in cinema was never a secondary occupation or a byproduct of his symphonic music—rather, he approached film music with uncommon seriousness, eventually conceptualizing his own experiences, publishing his observations, and generalizing his ideas for other composers and interested laymen. Khachaturian once declared that writing music for films is "exceptionally interesting work."

In the West, Khachaturian is best known for his "Sabre Dance" from the ballet *Gayane* (1942), other parts of which were famously used in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1971). But what is left of the Soviet films that Khachaturian himself scored in the 1930s to the 1960s? At the time of their release, these movies were celebrated as extraordinary cultural events, with special kudos for Khachaturian's scores, but they were completely forgotten afterwards.

Arguably, *Pepo* (1935) and *Zangezur* (1938) are a different case due to their status as treasures of Armenian national cinema—they still regularly appear on television—but what about *Salavat Yulaev* (1938)? Or *They Have a Homeland* (1954)? Or even *Othello* (1955), which won a prize in Venice? All these pictures have aged badly. Those of the 1940s are deeply infused with Stalinist ideology. Aesthetically, even the literary adaptations from the 1950s appear anachronistic. But should their music be dismissed as well? After all, Khachaturian was one of the most method-conscious composers ever to work in film, regardless of the sociopolitical framework. In order to do justice to his film scores, the only productive approach is to review them in their historical context and judge their achievements individually.

Aram Khachaturian was born in Georgia, in the town of Kodjori near Tiblisi, and lived most of his life in Moscow. Early on, he revealed a rare sensitivity for national peculiarities and folklore traditions in music, all of which obviously emerged from his upbringing in a multiethnic environment. He cultivated this ethnic perceptiveness throughout his career.

In the 1930s, this side of Khachaturian's talent happened to coincide with the Soviets' official emphasis on national cultural distinctions—often reflected in folkloric influences—under the umbrella of a unifying communist ideology. Within the framework of Socialist Realism, the folklore-based elements were counted under the rubric of *narodnost'*, a hard-to-translate term expressing the rootedness of art in the depths of the common people. Each ethnic group that was part of the USSR was expected to develop and formalize a recognizable culture, be it in literature or painting, music or film. Khachaturian became something of a "specialist" in ethnic music, with this expertise reflected in his early orchestral works and film scores. Thus, he was assigned the score for the first Tajik sound film, *The Garden* (1938), which became popular despite its trivial plot. Khachaturian's proactive musical internationalism explains why he has made an enormous impact on the musical cultures of Latin America, Asia, and other regions of the world.

Film still from *Zangezur* (1938)

In 1934, when Khachaturian graduated from the Moscow Conservatory, he was approached by the Armenkino studio, which was then preparing the first Armenian sound film, *Pepo* (1935). Adapted from Gabriel Sundukian's well-known play (1871) of the same name by the prominent Armenian director Hamo Bek-Nazarian, *Pepo* tells the story of a poor fisherman whose love is destroyed by the greed of the businessman Zimzimov, who successfully operates within the corrupt tsarist system. The film takes place in nineteenth-century Tiflis, a city with a motley mix of ethnicities, most prominently Armenians, Georgians, and Russians. Khachaturian was tasked with highlighting the specifics of each group, which he accomplished through ethnically marked songs and dances. But his score transcends the mere orchestration of cultural folk music: from the opening credits to the powerful finale, his music plays an integral role in the characterization of the dramatis personae and the juxtaposition of the upper and lower class. *Pepo* is filled with melodies inspired by folklore; its instrumentation is a blend of European and oriental instruments. Of vital importance for all early Soviet sound films were their songs—indeed, Pepo's song (performed when he is casting his net into the sea) remained in popular memory and was later believed to be a "folk song" (although it was in fact created by Khachaturian for *Pepo*). Likewise, the revolutionary march from *Zangezur* was subsequently performed countless times during military parades, without reference to its origin. For Khachaturian, this was the highest compliment for his art: that some of his creations dissociated themselves from the original film scores and became part of *living* folklore and everyday life, without being recognized as a composer's work!

Although the role of the composer in the production of a film is often quite distant from the shooting process, Khachaturian viewed himself from the very beginning as someone who "played along with the actors." To him, the choice of the right instrument and timbre was decisive for whether a melody

Detail of film still from *Zangezur* (1938)

succeeded in having an emotional effect. In *Pepo*, such a role is played by the *duduk*, an Armenian double reed. But Khachaturian also realized that the emotional pressure of music on the viewer should not be excessive; otherwise, the effect quickly wears off.

When *Pepo* was released to great acclaim, critics immediately realized the decisive role that Khachaturian's score played in its success. While previous Soviet sound pictures elevated popular song to a key element, endearing a character to viewers, Khachaturian had demonstrated many more musical facets that can enliven and deepen a film, from atmospheric interludes to emotional reflection and political expressiveness. *Pepo*'s political message was profoundly populist, contrasting the morally healthy and culturally potent exploited majority with the exploitative minority and their absurd narcissism.

The next project assigned to Khachaturian was more explicitly political: the high-profile revolutionary pamphlet *Zangezur* (1938). Its plot unfolds in 1921 when Armenian nationalist forces fiercely resisted the onslaught of Red Army units and their procommunist supporters. For this film, Khachaturian went beyond the traditional cinematic approach. Rather than moving from one piece to the next, his score features a central theme appearing in variation in different segments, from song to military march, and from lyrical interlude to dance.

Before World War II, Khachaturian used his ability to immerse himself in and empathize with different musical traditions in a number of pictures—he wrote the score for *Salavat Yulaev* (1938), based on Bashkir material. The war put an abrupt end to this period. In 1943 Mikhail Romm, one of the star directors of Stalinist cinema, asked Khachaturian to write the music for his antifascist drama *Human Being #217*, about the plight of civilians taken to Nazi Germany as slave laborers. For the first time, the dominant music was not ethno-folkloric but strictly political. For Romm, it was important to evoke strong negative emotions in response to the humiliation experienced by captured Soviet women. Khachaturian delivered a gripping score that supported Romm's agenda in an inventive manner. *Human Being #217* marked the beginning of Khachaturian's second period of cinematic work, during which he cultivated a profile as a Soviet film composer whose ethnic background was secondary to his stance as a communist and patriot. That profile became even sharper with Cold War pamphlets, such as *The Russian Question* (1947) and *Secret Mission* (1950). Both films reflect a growing anti-American trend in Soviet cinema. They gave Khachaturian a curious opportunity to musically characterize the Western world by using aggressive, jazz-inspired brass that stands in contrast to symphonic string segments when Soviet peace efforts are depicted.

In some cases, Khachaturian transformed his film scores into suites for orchestra that could be performed in concert halls. Thus, the two-hour score of *The Battle of Stalingrad* (1948) became a suite consisting of eight movements, while *Othello* (1955) was transformed into a suite of eleven movements, including a solo violin episode and a vocalise featuring Desdemona's theme. To Khachaturian, these suites held the promise of securing survival for his music after the films themselves disappeared from screens.

By his own account, Khachaturian was a film composer who valued interaction with the director in shaping the fabric of the film as a whole. In an article published in November 1955, Khachaturian mentioned a number of occasions in which he asked for a few extra seconds to express significant atmospheric changes or add emotional facets to a scene. To be sure, his contributions did not always make it through censorial controls. Thus, Khachaturian's musical accompaniments to grotesque scenes involving a hysterical Hitler (juxtaposed with Stalin's wise leadership) were cut from *The Battle of Stalingrad*—a loss he still regretted years later.

Arguably the two most important factors that made film music an attractive genre for Khachaturian were the ever-changing aesthetic challenges and the opportunity to directly contact an audience of millions. He was also fully aware of the downside of composing for cinema: once recorded, nothing could be modified or corrected. From a technical point of view, Khachaturian was particularly fascinated by the need to observe a precise timing framework in which every second was decisive.

Khachaturian's reputation as a composer is today primarily based on his ballets *Gayane* and *Spartacus*. The films that he scored are predominantly of historical interest; their cinematic value is, with few exceptions, relatively small. Does this mean that the music is negligible as well? Khachaturian's civic stance as a loyal Soviet citizen and communist believer is arguably no longer as detrimental to his reputation as it was in the 1980s and 1990s, when communism's fall from grace discredited even some of the greatest Soviet artists. Now, after the historical dust has largely settled, Western scholars need to come to terms with the cultural legacy of communism in a fair and differentiated manner.

Aram Khachaturian's film music is a case in point. Although it represents a central part of his legacy, it is hard to assess and even to access. The early films, while known in Armenia, are badly in need of restoration; the later ones are usually dismissed as pure propaganda. The suites derived from the film scores are rarely performed. All of this music must be viewed and heard within its historical context. It deserves energetic reconsideration and reevaluation.

FOR FURTHER READING

Gerald Abraham, *Eight Soviet Composers* (1943).

Aram Khachaturian, *O muzyke, o muzykantakh, o sebe* (1980).

David Kushner, "Aram Khachaturyan (1903–1978): A Retrospective," *Athens Journal of Humanities and Arts* 5, no. 4 (2018).

N. Mikoian, *Kinomuzyka Arama Khachaturiana* (Populiarnyi ocherk) (1984).

Joseph Schultz, "Aram Khachaturian and Socialist Realism: A Reconsideration," *Musicology* 1, no. 20 (2016), 87–100.

Grigory Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* (1959).

Carol Steyn, "Khachaturyan in Armenia today: His presence in Armenian music, art, and architecture, rooted in Socialist Realism," *SAJAH* 24, no. 3 (2009), 9–23.

Victor Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyanv* (1985).

Re-Thinking Rouben Mamoulian: *Love Me Tonight* and "Integrated Musical Theater"

JOSEPH HOROWITZ

The skill, the imagination and the generosity with which it has been brought to glowing life on the stage . . . make of it an evening of new experience, extraordinary interest and high, startling beauty. In a dozen years of first nights I have not seen in the American theatre an example of more resourceful and enkindling direction. In the dusk of the auditorium, one peers at the program to find out the name of the man who could take this wild, untrained, tatterdemalion horde of players and weave a pageant so fluent, so thrilling.

This 1927 accolade, by Alexander Woollcott (a critic of high consequence) in the *New York World*, heralded the advent of a Broadway *Wunderkind*, the twenty-nine-year-old director of the Theatre Guild's surprise hit *Porgy*.

Rouben Mamoulian seemed to have materialized overnight. He was an immigrant, born into a distinguished Armenian diaspora community in what is today Tbilisi, Georgia. He later studied in Moscow, where he observed the famous productions of Konstantin Stanislavski—whose Moscow Art Theatre troupe had been hosted in Tiflis by Mamoulian's mother. In Moscow, Mamoulian also studied the revolutionary musical-theater experiments of Yevgeny Vakhangov. He moved on to London, where he first directed a professionally mounted play—at the age of twenty-five. He then accepted an offer to direct opera in Rochester, New York, where an eccentric entrepreneur, George Eastman, lavishly subsidized a vibrant "Rochester Renaissance."

The play-with-music *Porgy* was Mamoulian's first Broadway assignment. Its success—widely attributed more to its director than to DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, who wrote it— begot the opera *Porgy and Bess*, also Mamoulian-directed. It bears stressing that Mamoulian enjoyed equal billing with the opera's composer, George Gershwin, whose fame was at its peak.

And yet Mamoulian's career charted a downward slope. His chief remaining Broadway successes were *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945). Of his sixteen Hollywood films (1929–57), the most memorable came early: *Love Me Tonight* (1932). Mamoulian's professional life collapsed into crisis when he was fired from Samuel Goldwyn's 1959 film version of *Porgy and Bess*, and then was terminated from Joseph Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* a new years later. He died in 1987, at age ninety, not having directed a play or film for a quarter-century.

During these two decades of idleness, Mamoulian produced myriad notebooks and "jottings" recalling past achievements. It was Mamoulian's conviction that he had never been properly acknowledged as a seminal innovator on Broadway and in Hollywood—and he was correct. The "integrated musical

Detail: *Porgy and Bess* (Mamoulian's 1935 Broadway production)

theater" we today associate with *Oklahoma!*, with Rodgers and Hammerstein and Agnes De Mille, in fact originates more with Mamoulian and his roots in Russian experimental theater.

These roots remain murky, however, because Mamoulian preferred to present himself as self-invented. We know too little about his Tiflis and Moscow years. What is certain is that he ultimately emerged with a fixed theatrical template. From Vakhtangov's legendary production of Maeterlinck's *The Miracle of St. Anthony*, Mamoulian imprinted on the miracle play a parable form with an uplifting close. Related to that was a fixed sanguine aesthetic rejecting verisimilitude; Mamoulian called it "art for life's sake." Obsessed with rhythm (another Vakhtangov trademark), Mamoulian precisely dictated the pacing and tempo of words spoken or sung, painstakingly embedded in a dramatic narrative.

Over the course of his career, these strategies would turn brittle and redundant, but they earlier empowered dazzling feats of originality. In the case of *Love Me Tonight*, Mamoulian created a singular musical film that sets out to trump the film musicals of Ernst Lubitsch. In the case of *Porgy and Bess*, Mamoulian crucially re-envisioned the opera's principal character and his fate.

It was *Love Me Tonight* that introduced Richard Rodgers to the Mamoulian method. Paramount Studios offered Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald, the stars of Ernst Lubitsch's film musicals *The Love Parade* (1929) and *One Hour with You* (1932). Mamoulian said yes, but nixed Paramount's offer of Oscar Straus, a composer steeped in Viennese nostalgia. Instead, he chose the fledgling song-writing team of Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. Hart was a scathing ironist—and Mamoulian was planning a film layered with barbed humor. Rodgers assumed he was being engaged to write songs. But Mamoulian wanted something Rodgers had never thought to attempt: a score comprehensively including song, dance, and incidental music. This—a Mamoulian intervention—was what ultimately led Rodgers toward his "breakthrough" musical *Oklahoma!*

The singular musical/comedic texture in *Love Me Tonight* commences with a one-minute overture: a medley of tunes to come. What follows is a daybreak sequence recalling the "Symphony of Noises" Mamoulian composed for *Porgy*. A clock strikes six. A workman pounds a hammer. The rhythmically coordinated sound ingredients, added one at a time, include snoring, sweeping, knife-sharpening, and shoe-making. A radio is turned on—and this music becomes a synchronized symphonic soundtrack to the growing din.

A seamless edit—the camera dollies into a small apartment—introduces Maurice (Maurice Chevalier), who pronounces, "Love song of Paree, you're much too loud for me." He closes his windows, the music diminishes, and he sings his "Song of Paree." It is punctuated by residual poundings and traffic horns. Meanwhile, the orchestra adds split-second sound cues supporting Maurice's sung list of such non-Parisian sounds as a nanny goat, a Viennese waltz, and a Spanish fandango. When Maurice undertakes a brisk stroll, his ongoing "Paree" song becomes a series of exchanges with passers-by and vendors. He reaches his shop: a musical codetta. Emil, a client, arrives to pick up his suit. "It's like poetry in a book. Oh, how beautiful I look!" The rhyming continues. The orchestra re-enters. We are irresistibly in the throes of one of the film's great numbers, "Isn't It Romantic?," during the course of which Rodgers's song inhabits a taxi cab, a train compartment full of singing soldiers, a march to the countryside, a gypsy encampment, and the fairytale castle balcony of Princess Jeanette (Jeanette MacDonald)—a fifteen-minute musical sequence comprising scene one of *Love Me Tonight*.

Scene two closes with a distended reprise of "Isn't it Romantic?" Mamoulian pans away from a bedroom and recalls the castle exterior with which this scene began. Full cadence. To commence act two: the Paris skyline exactly as at the beginning of act one; the orchestra recapitulates Maurice's "Song of Paree." In short: the narrative structure and musical structure of *Love Me Tonight* prove to be one and the same.

Detail: Rouben Mamoulian on the set of *High, Wide, and Handsome* (1937)

Repeated viewings of this two-part, twenty-four-minute "act one" disclose a great deal more. Mamoulian's prioritization of music is ingeniously sustained. A typical Mamoulian touch: the first hammer blow of the Symphony of Noises is less resonant than the second, because with the second blow we are in closeup. Where the music stops, Mamoulian's metronome and baton (his eccentric accoutrements on the set) take over: the dialogue in *Love Me Tonight* is itself unfailingly musical. A rhymed spoken exchange sets the *Allegretto* for "Isn't It Romantic?" The entire song is a musical exercise in transition. The soldiers slow the tune to a dotted rhythm march. The gypsy's tempo *rubato* slows it some more. The culminating version, embellished by the gypsy's *obbligato* solo violin, is a languorous *Andante*. Never mind that the ensuing mini-sequence contains no music as such: it functions as the song's ironic coda. In *Love Me Tonight* generally, words do not impart information; rather, their function is to entertain and—just as crucial—to further calibrate pace and transition. In addition to speech, rhymed speech, rhymed speech to music, and sung speech, *Love Me Tonight* specializes in rhythmic speech.

How considered is the film's musical structure? The principal set piece of act one (twenty-four minutes) is "Isn't It Romantic?," which returns as a coda. Act two (twenty-two minutes) begins with the same skyline and music as act one; it ends with a reprise of "Mimi," sung by Maurice ten minutes earlier. Act three (twenty-four minutes) begins with the Duke snoring—a distinct sonic whiff of the initial Symphony of Noises. An elaborate ensemble reprise of "Mimi" ensues. At the close of the act, Jeanette and Maurice mutually declare their love. "Love me tonight," Maurice implores—and the orchestra whispers a tune to come. Act four (twenty minutes) begins with the same perky refrain that began act one, scene two. Maurice and Jeanette then sing "Love Me Tonight," the title song first intimated moments earlier and reserved for this romantic consummation: a virtually Wagnerian move.

The promiscuous ease with which Mamoulian intermingles art and entertainment—his playful invocation and repudiation of genre—was variously noted or ignored. American and British reviews offer a foretaste of the reception history of *Porgy and Bess*. The question "What is it?" is differently asked

and answered. Frequent comparisons are made to Lubitsch, whose film musicals to date included *The Love Parade* (1929) and *One Hour with You* (1932) with Chevalier and MacDonald, and also to René Clair.

To this day, *Love Me Tonight* resists categorization—or submits to the category that most confines it: the Lubitsch film musical, a New World homage to the sly conspiratorial charm and teasing subject matter of Viennese operetta. That Lubitsch supplied Mamoulian with a template is no more obvious than Mamoulian's tactic of using that template as a toy. The densely agglomerated aural and visual layers of the Mamoulian style cancel the possibility of operetta sentiment, let alone Viennese nostalgia.

Lubitsch was a product of German-language theater, a member of Max Reinhardt's peerless Deutsches Theater. Mamoulian, by comparison, had no anchored past. As time would tell, he was a deracinated twentieth-century Armenian exile mutually susceptible to assimilation and estrangement. The greater difference between Lubitsch and Mamoulian, however, is between creating a film with music and composing a film musically. To pick another deracinated immigrant, fired by the artistic cauldron of early twentieth century Moscow and St. Petersburg: *Love Me Tonight* actually bears comparison with George Balanchine's choreographic genius for newly exploring the synergies binding sound and gesture.

For a variety of reasons, creating *Porgy* for the Theatre Guild in 1927, and eight years thereafter directing George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* on Broadway, were assignments as unthinkable for Ernst Lubitsch as they proved susceptible to the Mamoulian touch. To what extent that touch was "Armenian" is an interesting ultimate question. Adapting DuBose Heyward's novella *Porgy*, Mamoulian replaced a desolate ending (Porgy prostrate) with a redemptive, miraculous close (Porgy en route to "a heav'nly land"). Concomitantly, he reconceived Porgy as prepossessing and heroic: a moral factor. His anti-realist production was singularly fortified with elaborately choreographed tableaux, most notably at Robbins' funeral and in the hurricane scene. Tableau would remain a Mamoulian specialty: the merry-go-round pantomime beginning *Carousel* was one of his signature creations. His fascination with ritual and spectacle was lifelong. The most memorable sequences in his otherwise abortive films *Golden Boy* (1939) and *Blood and Sand* (1941) relish the rites of the bullring and the boxing ring.

In certain respects, the Mamoulian touch actually resembles the Parajanov touch to come. Can the miracle-play fixation that enriched or encumbered Mamoulian's complex American odyssey ultimately be traced, beyond Maeterlinck and Vakhtangov, to a lingering imprint of liturgical iconography? He is a man who never really fit on Broadway or in Hollywood. How "Armenian" did he remain?

—Parts of this essay are adapted from the author's 2013 book "*On My Way*": *The Untold Story of Rouben Mamoulian*, *George Gershwin*, and "*Porgy and Bess*."

Festival Participants

Levon Abrahamian, a native of Yerevan, is the head of the Department of Contemporary Anthropological Studies at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of Armenia's National Academy of Sciences. His four books include *Armenian Identity in a Changing World* (2006). A participant in Sergei Parajanov's classic film *The Color of Pomegranates*, he has also written "The Poetics of Parajanov's Cinema."

Daniel Bird has produced restorations of three Parajanov short films: *Kiev Frescoes*, *Hakob Hovnatanyan*, and *Arabesques on the Theme of Pirosmani*. He also conceived the installation "Temple of Cinema #1: Sayat Nova Outtakes," which was presented at the Rotterdam Film Festival and the Golden Apricot Film Festival in Yerevan. He is one of the founders of Friends of Walerian Borowczyk, a nonprofit association based in Paris to preserve and promote the legacy of the Polish painter, sculptor and filmmaker.

Jivan Gasparyan is a legendary Armenian performer and composer known as "master of the *duduk*." He has won four medals at UNESCO worldwide competitions and in 1973 was awarded the honorary title People's Artist of Armenia. In 2002, he received the WOMEX (World Music Expo) Lifetime Achievement Award.

Jivan Gasparyan, Jr., a native of Yerevan, has frequently joined his grandfather, Jivan Gasparyan, in performance in the world's major concert venues. His recent projects include "Ararat-Volga" with the Russian Strings Ensemble and "Same Sky" with multiple Grammy winner Larry Klein and musicians from seventeen countries.

Angel Gil-Ordóñez, Music Director of PostClassical Ensemble, is also Music Director of the Georgetown University Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of Perspectives Ensemble (NYC), and a regular guest at the Jacobs School of Music (University of Indiana Bloomington) and the Bowdoin International Music Festival. Formerly Associate Conductor of the National Orchestra of Spain, in 2006 he was awarded the Royal Order of Queen Isabella, Spain's highest civilian decoration, for advancing Spanish culture around the world.

Narek Hakhnazarian studied in his native Yerevan, at the Moscow Conservatory, and at the New England Conservatory before winning a gold medal at the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition at the age of twenty-two. He was named a BBC New Generation Artist in 2014. Today he regularly performs with the world's leading orchestras.

Joseph Horowitz, Executive Producer of PostClassical Ensemble, is the author of ten books dealing with the American musical experience, including "*On My Way*," about Rouben Mamoulian and George Gershwin. Formerly a *New York Times* music critic and Executive Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, he produces thematic concerts throughout the United States. He currently teaches a graduate seminar on music and race at SUNY Purchase.

Kurt Jensen is the author of the forthcoming biography *Rouben Mamoulian: The Art of Gods and Monkeys*. He has reviewed films for the Catholic News Service since 2007 and was the researcher/interviewer for Michael Sragow's *Victor Fleming: An American Movie Master* (2008). His writing has appeared in the *Los Angeles Review of Books* and *USA Today*.

Kevork Mourad is an Armenian Syrian visual artist who employs a technique of live drawing and animation in concert with musicians—a collaboration in which art and music harmonize with one another. He received a Master of Fine Arts Degree from the Yerevan Institute of Fine Arts. He is the only visual artist member in Yo-Yo Ma's Silkroad Ensemble and is featured in the film *Music of Strangers* (2016). Next season he rejoins PostClassical Ensemble in Manuel de Falla's *Master Peter Puppet's Show*.

Milena Oganesyan is a cultural anthropologist and translator. She has been conducting a multi-sited research project tracing the footprints of American Armenian theater and film director Rouben Mamoulian in Georgia, Armenia, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and across the United States. Like Rouben Mamoulian, she is a native of Tbilisi, Georgia.

Hoorig Taline Poochikian is an Armenian American violinist who began playing the violin with her mother at the age of six. She has performed across North America at Carnegie's Weill Hall, the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater, New York's Merkin Hall, and the National Arts Center in Ottawa, Canada. She has also performed in Armenia, Egypt, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Currently based in New York City, she is pursuing a doctoral degree in violin performance at Stony Brook University.

Peter Rollberg is Professor of Slavic Languages, Film Studies, and International Affairs at George Washington University. He earned his PhD in 1988 at the University of Leipzig and came to GWU in 1991 after teaching at Duke University. He published the *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Cinema* in 2008; the second, expanded edition appeared in 2016. He previously partnered with the PostClassical Ensemble at its Shostakovich and Shostakovich/Weinberg festivals.

Vache Sharafyan, one of Armenia's leading concert composers, studied at Yerevan State Conservatory. He has served as a guest lecturer at UCLA and as Professor of Music at the Jerusalem Theological Armenian Seminary. In addition to more than a hundred compositions, he is the author of a *Book of Chants* for Holy Sepulchre Church, Jerusalem. His compositions for the Silkroad Project include *The Sun, the Wine and the Wind of Time*, premiered by Yo-Yo Ma and the Silkroad Ensemble at Carnegie Hall in 2002.

The Zulal Trio is a New York-based Armenian a cappella trio comprising Teni Apelian, Yeraz Markarian, and Anaïs Tekerian. The trio rearranges and reimagines traditional Armenian folk melodies for stage and recording. Performing since 2002, Zulal has sung at such venues as the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The film program at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, is curated by Tom Vick. Formerly coordinator of film programs at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Vick has worked as a consultant for the International Film Festival Rotterdam and served on the juries of the Korean Film Festival in Los Angeles, the Fantasia Film Festival in Montreal, Filmfest DC, and the Smithsonian African American Film Festival. He has contributed essays to *World Cinema Directory: Japan*, *Film Festival Yearbook*, *Asian Geographic*, and other publications. He is the author of *Asian Cinema: A Field Guide* (2008) and *Time and Place are Nonsense: The Films of Seijun Suzuki* (2015).

The film program at the National Gallery of Art encourages viewers to learn about the history of the cinema, film as an art form, and the role of media in society through screenings, scholarly notes, filmmaker discussions, and public commentary by critics and academics. Innovative retrospectives, restored works of historical value, silent films with live musical accompaniment, recent documentaries, and experimental media by noted artists are offered on weekends throughout the year. The film department is a member of the International Federation of Film Archives.

The National Cinema Center of Armenia, established in 2006 by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, is the successor of the state-owned Hayfilm (Armenfilm) Studio named after Hamo Beknazaryan, founded in 1923. The Center operates within the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia and its principal task is to provide the Armenian film industry with a sustainable mechanism of state support in different stages of the development of film scripts, production, post-production, and eventually the promotion and distribution of Armenian cinema. It is also in charge of research, educational and development programs, as well as archiving, preserving, circulating, distributing, and producing films.

PostClassical Ensemble, Ensemble-in-Residence at the Washington National Cathedral, was founded in 2002 by Angel Gil-Ordóñez and Joseph Horowitz as an "experimental orchestral laboratory." PCE programming is thematic and often cross-disciplinary. Its signature productions include a series of Naxos DVDs featuring classic 1930s films with newly recorded soundtracks by Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, and Silvestre Revueltas. The current PCE season culminates in May with a Haydn festival at the National Cathedral featuring pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. Next season PCE will partner with the Freer Gallery and National Gallery of Art in a tribute to the Japanese film-maker Yasujiro Ozu.

Schedule of Film Events

The Color of Pomegranates

Preceded by *Kiev Frescoes*
Saturday, February 29, at 1 pm
Freer Gallery of Art, Meyer Auditorium

Four Acts for Syria

Followed by *Hakob Hovantanyan* and *Arabesques on the Pirosmani Theme*
Saturday, February 29, at 3:30 pm
Freer Gallery of Art, Meyer Auditorium

Zangezur: The Film Music of Aram Khachaturian

With additional film clips
Sunday, March 1, at 1 pm
Freer Gallery of Art, Meyer Auditorium

A Tribute to Rouben Mamoulian

Love Me Tonight

Followed by excerpts from *Porgy and Bess*
Saturday, March 14, at 2 pm
National Gallery of Art, East Building Auditorium

Related Armenian Festival Events

Armenian Odyssey

Wednesday, March 4, at 7:30 pm
Washington National Cathedral, Great Nave

Between Four Rivers: Armenian Spirituality

Saturday, March 7
Reception: 6:30 pm
Concert: 7:30 pm
Museum of the Bible

Cover: Film still from *The Color of Pomegranates*.