

20TH ANNIVERSARY REVIVAL

SOJOURN AT ARARAT

Created and performed by
Gerald Papasian and Nora Armani



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Drama Logue — Los Angeles — Steven Zeller

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The history of a forgotten people in search of an Identity and a Home is revealed through the simple love story of a man and a woman in this ode to life, where the absurdity of conflicts and war is depicted with scathingly humorous and poignantly nostalgic moments of sublime literature presented through exquisite performances.

Sojourn at Ararat was seen on 4 continents
in more than 25 cities worldwide between 1986 & 2000
**it has received many accolades and awards
and will soon be available on CD and DVD**

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THE PLAY'S TRAJECTORY

(1986 - 2000)

World Premiere: Edinburgh International Festival Fringe — with Gerald Papasian and Nora Armani in its original English version: SOJOURN AT ARARAT

North American Premiere: Ensemble Studio Theatre — Hollywood. “Pick of the week” LA-Weekly and 4 Drama Logue Critics’ Awards.

International Tours:

English version: London (Riverside Studios), Montreal (Centaur Theatre), Pasadena (Playhouse), Boston (Double Edge Theatre), Yerevan (Sountougian National Theatre of Armenia), Washington, D.C. (Hirshhorn Museum), Sydney (Opera House), Venice (Auditorio Santa Margherita). New York (Holocaust Museum – Brookdale), Chicago, Detroit (Laurence Institute), Ann Arbor (University), San Francisco, Fresno and Beirut (BUC).

French version: Paris (Salle Gaveau, Auditorium St. Germain, Théâtre de l’Ile St. Louis), Montreal (Centaur Theatre), Lyon (Salle Molière), Geneva (Salle Centrale), Tours (La Pléiade), Nantes (Festival de Théâtres du Monde), Venice (Auditorio Santa Margherita), Rambouillet (Library). Complete list available upon request.

Awards:

Drama Logue Critics Award: — Hollywood –Two consecutive years (Creation – Performances – Music)

Pick of the Week: — LA Weekly – Hollywood

Best Artistic Creation:— Society of Authors – Yerevan, Armenia

2 Best Actor Awards — Gerald Papasian and Nora Armani – Film Directors Guild – Armenia

2 Best Actor Awards — Gerald Papasian and Nora Armani – Theatre Guild – Armenia



THE PERFORMERS

Gerald Papasian

Born in Egypt into a musical and artistic family from Cairo and Alexandria, he studies at the Armenian School in Cairo, then in Cyprus, at the Melkonian Educational Institute. He pursues his higher education at the Yerevan State Fine and Dramatic Arts Institute from where he graduates with an MFA in Acting and Directing in 1976.

Gerald Papasian works as an actor in London then Los Angeles where he follows the courses at the Actor's Studio in the 80's.

He has a particular interest for the works of George Bernard Shaw, of which he has directed several in Los Angeles, London, Cairo and Yerevan.

In 1985, he is awarded the "Golden Star" by the California Motion Picture Council for his direction of Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*.

During the 80's, Gerald Papasian dedicates his time to translations (into English and French) and presentations of Armenian works on international stages. Together with Nora Armani, he co-creates and performs *Sojourn At Ararat*. He earns the "Drama Logue Award" for two consecutive years (1987 and 1988), in addition to other awards at the International Theatre Festival in Armenia (Yerevan) in 1991.

He translates, adapts and directs *Taparnigos*, Ladies' Dentist, by Hagop Baronian in London, then in the USA (Washington, Boston, New-York...). In 2001, he creates the French version for the play at the Théâtre Firmin Gémier d'Antony and in Paris at the Théâtre Déjazet.

In 1981 he translates and directs Armen Tigranian's *Anoush*, at the Michigan Opera Theater. The production receives "Best of the M.O.T." title. He directs the same opera for the 2001-2002 season also at the Michigan Opera Theater.

In 1997 he establishes the Dikran Tchouhadjian Research Centre in Paris for the restoration and promotion of Armenian theatre and music. Gerald Papasian has also restored the original score (in collaboration with Haig Avakian) as well as the book of Tchouhadjian's *Arshak II*. Thanks to this work, *Arshak II* had its World Première in the original version in 2001, at the San Francisco Opera, directed by Francesca Zambello and with Hasmik Papian and Nora Gubish. Gerald Papasian created the singing Armenian translation of the opera on this occasion.

Gerald Papasian is a visiting lecturer at the University of Venice for the department of Armenian language, headed by Prof. Levon Zekiyian. In this respect, he conceives and directs an audiovisual Western Armenian instruction course. He has also taught acting, directing and history of theatre at the University of La Verne in California for 5 years and has published numerous articles.

Gerald Papasian is based in Paris since 1993, where he pursues his acting and directing career for the stage, cinema and television. Recently he worked under the direction of Irina Brook, Patrick Dewolf and Robert Kechichian.

PUBLICATIONS:

- Anoush, book by Armen Tigranian, English translation. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan, 1981
- Sojourn at Ararat: Poems of Armenia (anthology of poems, preface and notes), Publisher's Choice, Mars, Pennsylvania, 1987
- Let's Speak Armenian, accompanying manual for audiovisual Armenian language course, University of Venice, 1993
- Arshak II (book—Armenian and English singing translations), San Francisco Opera, California, 1999
- "Tchouhadjian and Armenian opera" and "Tchouhadjian and Italy", in Catalogue of Roma-Armenia exhibit, under the direction of Claude Mutaian, Apostolic Library of the Vatican, 1999
- Newsletter of the Dikran Tchouhadjian Research Centre, No. 1 (second edition ; special issue), April 1999, pp. 1-8
- "The three versions of Arsace Secondo", article in Ararat Quarterly, vol. XI, Spring 1999, n° 158, pp. 43-45
- Arshak II, complete opera score by Dikran Tchouhadjian (editing and restoration in collaboration with Haig Avakian), Saténig D. Tchaker Foundation of the AGBU, Cairo, 2000
- "Arshak II – A Dream fulfilled", article in Opera, September 2001, volume 52, n° 9, pp. 1067-1073



Nora Armani

Born in Egypt of Armenian parents Nora divides her time between New York (where she is based) Paris and London. She is a true a multilingual International artist.

After completing her studies in London, she decides to follow “her heart”: taking the road to the theatre. She plays Shakespeare, Beckett, Shaw and Guitry and embarks on a breathtaking world tour with *Sojourn at Ararat*.

Invited to Armenia where she stars in a number of films, she becomes ambassador of Armenian Culture, specially Cinema. Her talent earns her several awards including “Best Actress” in Armenia and in Los Angeles.

Nora Armani performs on stage in England, where she successfully reincarnates Helen Weigel, Bertolt Brecht’s stage and life partner, in Günter Grass’s play in London. In Paris she performs in Fatima Gallère’s *La Fête Virile*, and in *Couples du Monde* (also with Gerald Papasian) as well as *Nannto Nannto* (which she co-creates). After numerous roles, her talent becomes evident in writing. Inspired by her own experiences, she writes and performs her own solo piece: *On the Couch with Nora Armani* on tour internationally in its English and French versions (*Sur le divan avec Nora Armani*). The play is broadcast on radio Aligre FM in Paris live in its entirety. She appears in various French films by directors: Catherine Corsini, Laurent Dussaux, Malik Chibane (with Anémone).

On the Couch with Nora Armani is received with great acclaim in New York for two consecutive years, earning her favorable reviews and international renown. The play is up for publication in its English version in an anthology in the USA later this year.



Nora Armani is also a lecturer and had lectured in Sociology and Cinema (Soviet Armenian Cinema) at the Harvard and Columbia Universities in the USA as well as at the London School of Economics from where she holds an M.Sc. degree in Sociology. At present she is writing on Armenian Cinema and is often invited to curate film programs and introduce Armenian films in film festivals. She curates festivals at various venues such as the Institut Français Ciné Lumière in London.

Her publications include sociological articles in academic journals such as Slovo, Forum, etc. as well as interviews with film makers such as Atom Egoyan and Robert Guediguian.

Nora Armani also runs theatre workshops focusing on writing based on one's own personal experiences. These workshops are for professional actors as well as non-actors.

Awards include: Best Actress Siunik Film Festival — Armenia 1999. Critics Award for Performance and Creation – Los Angeles Drama Logue 1988 and 1989.



THE PRESS

FRENCH LANGUAGE REVIEWS:

- « J'étais venu voir un spectacle, j'entends un cri, je vis un cri, un cri Venu du ventre de la Terre, un cri Venu de l'intérieur un cri de souffrance, un cri de révolte, un cri d'espérance, un cri d'amour. – C'est dur, très dur d'écrire, d'essayer de dire de « Chant d'Ararat ». Seuls peut-être le silence, la pudeur, le respect pourraient s'essayer à servir d'écrin : - à la poésie de chant d'Ararat, – aux mots, à la musique de chant d'Ararat, – aux deux corps que Nora Armani et Gérald Papasian à chant d'Ararat offrent chaque soir. Deux personnages disent, chantent, dialoguent des poèmes qui sont l'histoire d'un peuple... ; une femme, un homme, l'amour, la vie... Et toi, t'es là séduit, tu peux plus partir, ça peut pas être fini... !

– Bravo, debout, des deux mains et avec les yeux. »

Olivié Quotidien – Festival d'Avignon '91 – ç comme Sensible

- « La force de cette représentation est qu'elle s'adresse à tout les peuples du monde en mal d'identité, de terre. Les deux comédiens jouent sur la corde de l'émotion avec une sincérité touchante. Un spectacle dont on ne sort pas intacte. »

Le Provençal et le Méridional

- « On a beaucoup applaudi le Chant d'Ararat de Gerald Papasian et Nora Armani. Ce couple d'Arméniens prouve la vivacité d'une culture profanée à travers un florilège poétique, truculent terrible... C'est bouleversant ! Je n'avais jamais vu un spectacle dans lequel l'amour-criant de présence-d'un homme et d'une femme s'enrichit de la mémoire de tout un peuple... Peuple qui n'existe plus qu'à la grâce de leur passion ! »

Ouest-France – Christophe Deshoulières

- « Gerald Papasian et Nora Armani occupent la scène en véritable professionnels qu'ils sont. »

Le Dauphiné – Olivier Crozelon

- « Succès notable. »

Les Echos – Gilles Costaz

ENGLISH LANGUAGE REVIEWS:

- “Two absolutely superb, exquisite, virtuoso performances highlight Sojourn at Ararat”... “No one leaves unaffected”.
- “... an elegant, lively and tender encounter between a man and a woman who meet, fall in love and reflect on the continual destruction of their people.”
- “...Sojourn at Ararat is a powerful statement about the tenacity and endurance of the Armenian people.”

Drama Logue- Los Angeles – Steven Zeller

- “...a journey through poetry celebrating earth, sky and love to the despair, pathos and utter horror of the Armenian massacres under the Ottoman Empire...
- “In this splendid show, Armenians light up their homeland, and with it, all humanity.”

The Scotsman – Howard Purdie

- “The indomitable spirit of a nation or race that has been physically dominated throughout history shines through this beautiful staging of translations of Armenian poetry through the ages”
- “...two dynamic performers (Gerald Papasian and Nora Armani) who know how to blend their gorgeous voices and expertly trained bodies to create theatrical magic...”

LA Weekly- Los Angeles – Pick of the Week

- “It is ruefully true, as this two-character epic dramatic paean to the Armenian people makes clear, that the world remembers the Holocaust, but not the massive genocide of Armenians by Ottoman Turks in 1915. That is certainly one reason to see ‘Sojourn at Ararat’. But it is not the main reason. The production, with chameleon-like grace and exquisite craft, achieves vast scale with a lightness of being.”
- “... the engaging, burly Papasian and the deft, bedazzling Armani, create textured characters and substantial momentum.”

Los Angeles Times – Ray Lloynd

- ‘Sojourn at Ararat’ is well worth a visit “The most vivid story is the chilling recollection of the 1915 genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. Brilliantly performed by Papasian and Armani.”
- “Watching this incredible pair, one is reminded that magic can still take place on the stage.”
- “Powerful, moving, impressive and entertaining, ‘Sojourn at Ararat’ is an unqualified delight.”

Herald Examiner- Los Angeles – Clifford Gallo

- “...it touches on the universal while probing the particular angst of a very special nation.”
- “...highly polished performances...”
- “The sheets contain a quote from American Armenian writer William Saroyan, daring anyone to destroy Armenia, ‘For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a new Armenia.’ Last night, at Centaur Theatre Papasian and Armani did just that.”

The Gazette – Montréal – Pat Donnelly

- “Papasian and Armani speak their words clearly and with passion and the meanings are profound and disturbing.”

Daily Variety- Los Angeles – T.C.Smith, B.Daniel Martinez

- “...it is the performances which stir the imagination and create the historical tapestry of these people. It provides a most moving evening of theatre which will resonate long after the event.”

Pasadena Weekly – John C. Mahoney

- “If that fateful date in 1915 is forgotten, more’s the pity. If the Armenian holocaust is ignored, more’s the shame. ‘A landless people for an unpeopled land’- in Saroyan’s words ‘A small tribe of unimportant people’ – still they survive and, given half a chance, thrive. Papasian and Armani here beat the drum for survival. Armenians and all others should hear the drumbeat.”

Drama Logue- USA – Polly Warfield

- **A Spirited and Spiritual Journey** “...a rich cultural tapestry. [...] the verse becomes the voice of a nation, of a people that perseveres despite persecution of a human spirit that refuses to die...”

- “The two gifted actors gently smooth out the crumpled-up pieces of paper...they symbolically string together the scattered beads and show that culture, any culture, lives on through the art its people creates.”

The Boston Globe – Patti Hartigan

- “Sojourn at Ararat [...] encapsulates the best in Armenian literature, national history and centuries old aspirations.”

- “Gerald Papasian and Nora Armani, who perform both in French and English, delight their audience not only with their acting, but also with their linguistic virtuosity.”

ARARAT Literary Journal – New York – A.J. Hacikyan

- “Gerald and Nora...have successfully created a dramatic piece which has enriched the repertory of the Armenian Theatre in the Diaspora.”

- “...a high caliber theatrical experience.”

The Armenian Observer – Los Angeles – A.K.K.

- “...a salute to the Armenian people...”

- “...no one can come away from ‘Sojourn at Ararat’ unmoved.”

- “...those of us who are not of Armenian extraction should specifically take time out of our day to see this work. Those who are, will find it a great tribute to their own culture.”

Star News Today – Francine Baun Nicholson

- ‘Ararat’ weaves simple, potent image of Armenia...It also provides a microcosm on the broader view of what it means to be a human being.”

News Press – Alan Raeburn

AUTHORS

The original poems representing the original material of the play extend from pre-Christian Armenia to this day, including the Diaspora.

THE POETS QUOTED ARE:

Vahan Tekeyan – Diaspora (1878-1945)
Parouir Sevak – Armenia (1924-1971)
Gevorg Emin – Armenia (1919- 1998)
Tanyel Varoujan – Diaspora (1884- 1915)*
Gregory of Narek – Armenia (951- 1003)
Nahapet Koutchak – Armenia (16th C.)
Siamanto – Diaspora (1875- 1915)*
Missak Medzarents – Diaspora (1886-1908)
Hovhanness Toumanyanyan – Armenia (1969-1923)
Yeghishe Tcharents – Armenia (1897-1937)
Avedik Issahakian – Armenia (1875-1957)
Hovhannes Shiraz – Armenia (1915-1984)
Silva Kapoutikian – Armenia (1919- 2006)
William Saroyan – Diaspora (1909-1981)
Zahrad – Diaspora (1924-)

(*) Perished in 1915 during the Armenian Genocide.

Translations are by Gerald Papasian, Nora Armani and John Papasian. Some free adaptations of existing translations have also been made to suit the performance text.

SOJOURN AT ARARAT

Excerpt from the opening of the play

Time: From 1000 B.C. to the present.

Place: The Valley of Ararat, Armenia.

Set & Props: Two chairs, an Armenian drum (dhol), a book of poems, two pads and two pencils.

Two chairs and an Armenian drum (*dhol*) are placed center stage. *(A joyful tune ushers the two actors into the auditorium and they proceed towards the stage, shaking hands with the audience members and greeting them with the first words from the play. Towards the end of the first poem, they are already on stage).*

SHE

Good Day!

HE

Good Day !

SHE

I utter those two little words
Like showing a stamped passport,

HE

Like telling an autobiography,

SHE

Or like filling in a questionnaire.

HE

Good Day !

SHE

If we could say it to the train,
the ship
or the aeroplane
And go in
with your...

HE

"Good Day" as a ticket.

SHE

Good Day !

HE

If you could say it to a strange woman
And she loved you at that very moment.
Or said with a smile of regret
That others had greeted her before you.

SHE

Good Day !

HE

If you could say it to the silent earth
And it sprouted and produced ears of corn.

SHE

Good Day !

HE

If you could say even to death
and it understood that by approaching you
It had hurried,
hurried a great deal!
If...

SHE

“Good Day” could turn into a real, a new ‘open Sesame’,
And if then you said even to the bear:

HE

Good Day !

SHE

It too at that very moment,
Turned into a toy for our child
and into such a kind of toy
that needed no winding and was not easily broken.
And in the same way, the snake
turned into a walking stick for the old;
the crocodile turned into a container for toys;

the wild stag into a clothes rack,
and the storm into a company of dancers,
while man indeed turned into Man!
Good Day!

HE
There's nothing impossible in this world
If in this world there reigns goodness
Which in our mouths has turned into...
Good Day !

(Armenian flute music (duduk). She enters. Takes a bunch of poems and starts to read. He enters holding a writing pad. He tries to write a poem. Unhappy with what he has written he tears off the page. The noise makes her raise her head. their eyes meet. He makes a move towards her. She takes a few steps in the opposite direction. He takes one more step. She practically turns her back to him and is about to exit. He waits. Nothing happens. He decides it is 'useless' and turns to leave too. Suddenly thunder is heard. Both raise their eyes. A second thunder strikes which moves them both under the same imaginary awning, between the two chairs. He smiles at her. She is still scared by the thunder. It rains. As if to comfort her, he starts reciting the story of the birth of the Armenian nation.)

The skies were in labor.
The Earth was in labor.
And so was the crimson sea,
And in the sea a small red reed
was also in labor.
and out of the reed came smoke,
and out of the reed came flames.
and from the flames dashed forth
a blond youth
with fiery hair,
and a flaming beard...

SHE

(with a timid smile).

...and his eyes were two blazing suns.

HE

I am an Armenian, ancient as this Biblical Ararat
My feet are still wet from the waters of the flood
Mine, the sacred land that Noah first saw;
mine, the sword that cut down the Babylonian foe!
One morning here in Ararat's green valley
my hammer and my pick aside I flung
and lit a fire on the Chaldean arter.

SHE

Those days both Ararat and I were young !

(The rain diminishes).

On ancient Mount Ararat
ages for an instant sat
and passed on.
Lighting struck its diamond creast
to destroy her timeless rest
and passed on.
Endless streams of frightened men
gazed upon her flanks and then
they passed on.

HE

(The rain has stopped).

'Tis your turn. 'Tis your turn now
to marvel at her proud brow
and pass on.

(They come out from under the 'imagineray awning' into the sun...)

(END of Excerpt)

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND FEES

Length of play: 70 minutes with no interval (flexible for longer or shorter needs)

Performance Space: 20 ft. wide with 15 ft. deep (flexible for smaller or larger spaces)

Set: Two wooden chairs in black box (drapes or naked walls) stage

Music: provided on CD

Set-up rehearsal: 2 technical rehearsals (8 hours) for focusing lights, reviewing cues and full rehearsal (not counting set up of spotlights). SM script and lighting plans provided.

Performance Fees: Call for your sepcific request as fees vary with auditorium size and number of performances. (Range: \$2000-5000 – less for Educational Institutions.)

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