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The English-Speaking Union
& ESU Armenia Branch

An Evening of
Armenian Dance and Poetry

The Spirit,
the **Passion**

with **Shakeh Avanesian**
and **Peter Barker, MBE**

Wednesday 24th March 2004, 7 pm
Dartmouth House
37 Charles Street, London W1J 5ED
Tel. 020 7529 1550

**Shakeh
Avanessian**

Shakeh Avanessian is an acclaimed solo dance artist and choreographer. Her unique presentation and interpretation highlight the power, authenticity and spirituality of Armenian dances. Winner of First Prize in the Armenian Folk Dance Solo Competition in 1984, she has performed and taught throughout Europe and the Middle East.

Born in England of English-Armenian heritage, Shakeh started dancing at the age of six, with a foundation of classical ballet, while spending her formative years in Iran. In her youth she trained and performed with the Anahid Djambazian Dance Company in Iran. Returning to England in 1978, Shakeh continued to develop her artistic style – turning her dances into intricate ‘narratives’ of the human spirit. In recognition of her distinctive artistic approach, she has been invited to conduct dance workshops in over a dozen cities in Europe.

Shakeh was a founding member and Principle Soloist of the Arax Dance Ensemble and later danced with the Armenian Dance Theatre in London. She is co-producer (with Laura Shannon) of *Gorani: Traditional Dances from the Armenian Homeland*, a CD and booklet of Armenian folk dance music. Her 2004 schedule includes teaching and performances at a host of venues in Britain, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Lebanon.

**Peter
Barker
MBE**

After training at RADA, Peter Barker worked for several years as an actor until he was recruited by the BBC as an announcer on all three of its radio programmes - Home, Light and Third. He is a member of the Queen's English Society. In 1963 he was in at the start of what was to become Radio 3. For thirty years he was one of its daily voices, introducing music of all kinds as well as selecting and reading a variety of poetry and prose. He has made tape recordings of scores of unabridged books by a great range of authors, both for the blind and for commercial labels.



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PROGRAMME

Welcome: Helen Green, ESU Manager of International Programmes
Opening Remarks from ESU Armenia

I Travelled the world SAYAT NOVA (1712–1795)

Ouzoundara

Rite of Passage: the end of one stage of life and the emergence of another

A dance typical of a young bride and her maiden friends as she leaves the threshold of her father's house. This dance represents a rite of passage: the end of one stage of life and the emergence of another. The style is slow and graceful, the gestures portraying personal beauty and pride. There is a subdued joy at what life holds ahead, combined with slight melancholy at leaving the parental home, beautifully echoed in the music.

Choreography: Vanush Khanamirian; Arrangement: Yerdjanik Martikian; Music: Folk Traditional

One Of A Kind SAYAT NOVA (1712–1795)

Gharabaghi Yeghnik

Gazelle as the embodiment of pride, dignity, strength, grace & beauty of the Armenian people

Originally choreographed by Vanush Khanamirian for Sophie Devoyan of the Armenian State Ensemble, in this presentation the gazelle is also the bride of Gharabagh; the embodiment of pride, dignity, strength, grace and beauty at its most vulnerable; symbolic of Armenian life and history.

*Arrangement: Yerdjanik Martikian;
Composer: Alexander Hekimyan*

The Apricot Tree HAROUT GOSDANTIAN (1926–)

Dzirani Dzar

The Apricot Tree (Prunus Armenicus), symbol of fertility

The apricot tree, symbol of fertility, is addressed in this poignant song transcribed by Father Komitas (1869–1935) the great composer and founder of

Armenian ethnomusicology. In his well-known arrangement for piano and voice, he added two song fragments to this longer one.

Choreography: Norayr Mehrabian

*Apricot tree, do not bear fruit,
Don't stir your branches!
Each time I walk by you,
Don't stir up my anguish.*

*I have no stone to sit upon,
No love for my burning heart.
Oh, wretched, empty world
I have an orchard but no fruit.*

Akhtamar HOVANESS TOUMANIAN (1869–1923)

Eem Anoush Davigh *Choreography: Yerdjanik Martikian; Music: Traditional song arranged by Khachatur Avetissian*
A dance of unrequited love

I love the Sun-Baked Taste of Armenian Words YEGHISHE CHARENTS (1897–1937)

Tzaghkatz Baleni In this lyrical song and dance we are reminded of a blossoming cherry tree: the arching branches, the wide roots, heavy boughs alive with the flow of sap, the promised fruits with sun ripened juices. Nature announces the arrival of spring!

*The Blossoming Cherry Tree
is a joyful reminder of the
return of Spring! Life!*

Choreography: Yerdjanik Martikian; Music: Traditional song arranged by Khachatur Avetissian

*Closing remarks: His Excellency Dr Vahe Gabrielyan,
the Armenian Ambassador to the Court of St. James*