



*Shakeh Avanesian Major*

**SHAKEH AVANESSIAN MAJOR** is an acclaimed solo dance artist and choreographer based in London. 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 London of English-Armenian heritage, Shakeh started dancing at the age of six, with a foundation in classical ballet, while spending her formative years 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. Her 2005 schedule includes teaching and performances at a host of venues in Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Shakeh was a founding member and Principle Soloist of the Arax Dance Ensemble. She is co-producer (with Laura Shannon) of “Gorani: Traditional Dances from the Armenian Homeland”, a CD and booklet of Armenian folk dance music.



*50th Anniversary \* Haigazian University \* Beirut, 29 June 2005*

## *Solo Dance Program*

### **GILIGIA**

*(Cilicia)*

Choreography: Shakeh Avanesian Major

Lyrics: Nahabed Rousinian

Vocalist: Shushan Petrosyan

### **DZIRANI DZAR**

*(The Apricot Tree)*

Choreography: Norayr Mehrabyan

Arrangement: Komitas Vardapet

### **DZAGHGATS BALENI**

*(The Blossoming Cherry Tree)*

Choreography: Yerdjanik Djambazian Martikian

Arrangement: Khatchatour Avetissian

## *Program Notes*

The three dances I have chosen for this evening's celebration highlight the decades long journey of Haigazian University. The first dance, **Giligia** (*Cilicia*), especially choreographed for this anniversary, pays homage to the ancestral homeland of virtually every Lebanese Armenian. The survivors of the Genocide rebuilt their lives and community in Lebanon, and for every lost or destroyed educational hearth, they rebuilt new schools and centres of learning. Haigazian was the crowning of that difficult but lasting effort.

The seeds that were planted fifty years ago have grown into a strong and beautifully branched tree. Like the **Dzirani Dzar** (*The Apricot Tree*), the theme of the second dance, it has deep roots both in the Armenian heritage and in the soil of Lebanon.

For fifty years, generations of Lebanese youth have spread the fruits of Haigazian in the Middle East and around the world, like **Dzaghgats Baleni** (*The Blossoming Cherry Tree*).

May Haigazian continue to blossom and to enrich the lives of those who share her story in the coming decades.