

# **Turkish-Armenian platform's work paves way for Gomidas concert**

Thursday 23 December 2010, by [Vercihan Ziflioglu](#)

**Turkish and Armenian youth began working for more understanding between the communities at the beginning of 2010 when they organized a platform to commemorate Kütahya-born Armenian composer Gomidas Vartabed in Turkey. On the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, Gomidas is being honored not only in the diaspora and Armenia but also in his native land.**

Gomidas is commemorated in various concerts in Turkey organized by the Gomidas Platform Members.

Turkish and Armenian artists will continue to build bridges between their respective communities when they honor Kütahya-born Gomidas Vartabed, a seminal figure in Armenian music, when they perform Thursday night in honor of the great composer.

"Respect for Gomidas: Songs of This Land," which is being organized in honor of the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gomidas' birth in the Aegean province of Kütahya, begins at 8:30 p.m. at Istanbul's Lütü Kirdar Congress and Exhibition Hall.

The concert marks the latest in a series of events commemorating the great composer and ethnomusicologist, who has already been honored with a number of ceremonies both in Armenia and the diaspora. In Istanbul, the 2010 European Capital of Culture agency supported the Kusan 2010 concert to commemorate Gomidas last month.

## **Gomidas Platform helping preserve music**

During a conference titled "Cultural Genocide" held last April in Armenia in collaboration with the Diaspora Ministry and the Genocide Museum, a speaker said Turkish artists had begun to claim Gomidas' music as their own, citing a group of young people from Istanbul and Armenia that had formed the Gomidas Platform.

Members of the Gomidas Platform, however, merely "want to commemorate Gomidas in the land where he was born," said Istanbul University Radio and Television Department student 23-year old Sayat Dağlıyan, who heads the group.

The platform was formed to commemorate Gomidas in his homeland with music and hymns; thanks to the group's tireless work, a number of events and concerts were organized throughout the year to commemorate the great ethnomusicologist.

Thursday's concert is being held in collaboration with Anadolu Kültür, the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts and Kalan Music and features American piano virtuoso Sahan Arzruni, as well as the Istanbul State Opera and Ballet's Armenian soloists Sevan Şencan, Kevork Tavityan and Ari Edirne. The Boğaziçi Gösteri Sanatları Topluluğu, Aşkın Ensemble, Aynur Doğan and Şevval Sam will also be on stage.

## **A life of suffering**

Born Soğomon Kevork Soğomonyan in 1869, Gomidas had a musical intellect that was ahead of his time. Orphaned at a young age, he was discovered by clerics and sent to the Armenian Apostolic Central Church,

or Etchmiadzin, in Armenia to receive religious education.

Though he eventually became a priest - at which time he took the clerical name with which he later became famous - Gomidas was known to devote most of his life to music, researching and working on Turkish, Kurdish, Azeri and Iranian music.

Despite studying music at Berlin University and organizing important conferences there, his immense talent was little recognized or appreciated in Armenia.

Gomidas also recorded the polyphonic "Badarak" (Divine Liturgy) for the Armenian Apostolic Church on a gramophone record at the beginning of the 1900s but the act led to large problems with both Etchmiadzin and the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul. Still, the composer persevered and formed the historic Kusan Choir in Istanbul.

He also had close relations with Turkish intellectuals, such as one of the Ottoman Empire's pioneering female authors, Halide Edip Adıvar, and her husband, Adnan Adıvar.

His prolific work was effectively cut short on April 24, 1915, when his home was raided by authorities, who burned all his notes and compositions before him, including a key manuscript from Turkish classical music, the notes of Baba Hamparsum.

Gomidas was arrested along with 230 Armenian intellectuals on the date, which formed the beginning of the deportations against the empire's Armenians during World War I. The composer was rescued thanks to the intervention of Turkish intellectuals but his experiences during the tribulations left him with severe psychological health problems, leading him to abandon music. He eventually died in 1935 in exile in France.

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## Sources

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