

These two men, parted by generations, are bonded by their love for the puppet theater. “I have been here in this theater almost since the day I was born, and everything around here is very precious to me,” says Haik.

Grandpa and grandson: From puppet theater to digital productions

Besides performing and directing plays at the Agoulis Puppet Theater, Haik runs Agoulis Productions, a digital production studio functioning parallel to the puppet theater. It is the latest initiative of Haik. “Our studio plans to produce video projects, mainly child-oriented, where the main characters are puppets.” The projects will include plays and public awareness mini-sessions.

Haik talks about the first project to be launched. It is called Your Armenian Church, a half-hour DVD, where six of Armenia’s historic churches are presented by a puppet-priest. At Haghazardzin, Etchmiadzin, Noravank, Ambert, Tatev, and Mairavank, the muppet priest takes the children on a tour, pops out his head from behind khachkars (stone-crosses) and tells the stories of each place in an animated and dynamic way.

Currently the project is in the stage of finding additional funding. Agoulis Productions has already secured one quarter of the \$5000 production cost. “The Toronto-based Armenian film festival Nour has donated the money needed to start up,” says Haik.

The love Haik has for the puppets is immense. He has grown up with them. He goes on explaining that the initial aim of founding Agoulis productions was to extend the puppets far beyond the theater. “I want them to come out of the stage and through discs penetrate into the houses of more children in Armenia and abroad,” he says. 𐌌𐌍



Pianist Serouj Kradjian.

Serouj Kradjian: A pianist’s portrait

by Sarah Dzida

LOS ANGELES – Classical pianist Serouj Kradjian jokes that as a young man striving to succeed as a concert pianist, he was often met with skepticism by the older Armenian generation. “Of course there are many Armenians that appreciate music and art,” Kradjian says, “But it is usually atypical of them to encourage their kids to choose music as a profession.” Today, however, Kradjian rarely meets a skeptic because his hands are very busy whether with a new CD; composing or arranging music; playing in concert halls worldwide as a soloist whose repertoire includes Liszt and Rachmaninoff, as an accompanist to vocalists like his wife soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian or as part of a group. The pianist, who bases himself out of both Canada and Spain, appears to be able to credit his continued success in an exclusive industry to his desire to remain a musician

with no set artistic boundaries.

As the winner of the 2006 Canadian Juno Award for Classical Album of the Year, Kradjian says, “The one advice I give to people because it always works for me is reinventing yourself. I don’t plan ahead much because I also know how to go with the flow.”

Musical foundation

For his musical start, Kradjian credits his Armenian parents for giving him his first piano. Born in Lebanon a few years before the civil war, he says that his father bought the instrument at a time when few people were thinking about music. Later, the family moved to Canada where Kradjian first attended the Royal Conservatory of Music and then the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. “That was a big decision for me because that’s when I decided to pursue music [as a career],” he says, “And I’m glad I did because years later I find it’s very gratifying to live as a musician.”

Keyboard