

Citations and References – John Bilezikjian

San Diego's St. John Garabed Church holds food festival. (2007, October 27). *Armenian Reporter*, p. BB9.

Abstract:

Over 300 books were sold as many other vendors and artists were selling their Armenian handicrafts and artwork. "People who have never heard of Gomidas were buying his CD's," church member Rose Babayan said. "We also sold a lot of books on the Armenian Genocide, people are finally digging into this history." Days before the festival, Rose Babayan and Yeretzgin Araxy Tatoulian trekked to Los Angeles and piled up a van with books and CD's, and hauled them to San Diego in order to share these cultural treasures with the rest of the San Diego community. While Yeretzgin Araxy was explaining the works of Armenian well-known writers to a San Diegan couple who lived down from the street from the church, she explained, "For me, Armenian literature is the core of who we are. These relics of literature should not be left to the abyss of history, but shared with all."

[John Bilezikjian] serenaded the audience with soulful Armenian songs that conjured up the spirit and traditional lore of the Armenian people. Bilezikjian is one of the few world-renowned Armenian oudists who has enriched Armenian festivals, weddings and concerts for decades. His knowledge of Armenian music is extensive and he is one of the few musicians who really grasps the wider cultural context of Armenian music. As people danced to the Tamzara, Bilezikjian explained to the audience that this popular folk dance "originated in historic Armenia, but quickly was adopted into the folk traditions of many other cultures, such as the Assyrians, Greeks and Serbs."

Stella Agamirzoyan, is not only in the kitchen during the food festival, but she is at church at least four times a week, volunteering her time to take care of all the domestic needs of St. John Garabed. "I feel like the church is my home," Stella said. "When I come here, I feel like I am with my family, and it gives me so much joy to serve my church and the Armenian people." Ms. Argamazoyan arrived from Baku, Azerbaijan more that 16 years ago due to the pogroms carried out against ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan. Like so many other Armenian families who escaped persecution in Azerbaijan, Stella and her family found refuge in San Diego, where the St. John Garabed Armenian Church became a bastion of strength, comfort and familiarity for so many of the families. "In Baku, all we could do was light candles in the church. Here, in San Diego, we have become involved in the community of the church, I will do everything I can to make the church flourish," Stella said.

Adrinh Grigorian (2007, July 28). *A taste of pomegranate.* *Armenian Reporter*, p. C12-C16.

Abstract:

Among the highlights of the afternoon was the unveiling of a public art project called "Opening Eyes" by [Gregory Beylerian] in collaboration with students from the Pilibos school. The oversized piece, measuring seven feet by seven feet, marks their collective

reflection of the Little Armenia community that surrounds them. The students of Pilbos who do not have a formal art background created a multidimensional, multi-layered piece that promoted messages of peace, coexistence, and tradition. Beylerian noted that, "As they set out to create art they realized a common ground, their mission: to celebrate diversity and open the eyes of Armenians and all the people of the world through the work of art that we celebrate together." The piece is about "self expression and to not be afraid of free form."

The experience of working with the students revealed a message: "Transforming conciseness for the better." Beylerian goes on to say that, "Working with these students I have once again found youth in myself." The group of students shared the mutual admiration. One of the young artists, Nicole Antonian said that their "mission was based on bringing peace and opening eyes." She points out that, "We are all the same in different ways, hopefully we can hold hands, open eyes and come together." The experience also gave the students a chance get closer to one another. "It's funny what a piece of art can do, it can change your mind pretty easily. Greg taught us that even the smallest mistake can be something really beautiful."

Other festivities included a performance by members of the Nayiri Dance Ensemble and a concert by the incomparable John Bilezikjian Band, where Armenians and non-Armenians danced to traditional music well into the afternoon. The day culminated with a performance of Sojourn at Ararat, at the nearby Fountain Theater.

Carol Simmons Staff Writer (2006, April 15). *Concert to mark oud debut. Dayton Daily News*, p. D19.

Abstract:

The music and dance of the ancient Persian desert will be spotlighted this evening in a performance at the Mathile Theatre of the Benjamin and Marian Schuster Performing Arts Center.

According to his resume, Bilezikjiam (sic) has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestra as well as the Los Angeles Mandolin Orchestra and the Pacific Palisades Symphony. Last June, he performed with the Boston Pops Orchestra, marking the oud's debut as a solo instrument with that organization.

John Bilezikjian Writes Oud Method Book. (2006, March 11). *Armenian Reporter International*, p. 3.

Abstract:

The last piece in the book, track 27, is an original composition originally written in the early 1970's by the composer and dedicated to the master oudist George Mgrdichian, one of [John Bilezikjian]'s mentors. The composition is called "Bagatelle" and is written as an oud duet.

John Bilezikjian (2006, June 3). *Tribute to George Mgrdichian. Armenian Reporter International*, p. 3.

Abstract:

Mr. [George Mgrdichian] came on to the Armenian musical scene early in the 1950's on LP with the release of his popular "The Oud" album, which was released on the Carlton label in 1958. An interesting story concerning the release of this LP was that Mr. Mgrdichian was signed to the Roulette label and delivered 3 LP's on that label, The rendezvous series. Concerning "The Oud" album, Mr. Mgrdichian took the first name of his father Aram and the last name of his mother Arakelian, put them together and, voila, the player whose name that appears on "The Oud" LP is Aram Arakelian. There is no mistaking, though, the George Mgrdichian touch and technique on the oud, that is for sure.

'Pomegranate' to Color the Screen At New Jersey Film Fest. (2006, March 25). *Armenian Reporter International*, p. 6.

Abstract:

ASBURY PARK, NJ - The featured film "Pomegranate" will be shown on Saturday, April 1, 2006 at 5:15 p.m. as part of the Garden State Film Festival in Asbury Park, NJ. Michael Goorjian (Party of Five, Illusion) stars with James Martin and Krikor Satamian in this endearing, quirky tale about two cousins from Beirut who are separated as boys and come to reunite in a quest to find their eccentric, gifted poet of a grandfather 17 years later in Los Angeles. The music soundtrack was composed and performed by the great oudist John Bilezikjian.

KEITH POWERS (2005, June 13). MUSIC REVIEW; *Boston Pops shows its true colors in concert* :[All Editions]. *Boston Herald*, p. 036.

Abstract:

The Boston Pops, America's quintessential musical patriots, began celebrating Flag Day three days early on Saturday evening. Principal guest conductor [Bruce Hangen] led the orchestra, a trimmed down Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and several soloists in the refreshingly cool confines of Symphony Hall on this sweltering summer night.

Mercifully, "Love it or leave it" tendencies were tempered greatly by mixing the Americana portion of the bill with the Pops' annual Armenian night. Oud master John Bilezikjian treated the largely ethnic crowd to a Vivaldi lute concerto, a delightful arrangement of Albeniz's "Leyenda," and Khachaturian's familiar "Saber Dance."

Burstein, Sergio (2002, February 13). *Los Lobos LE CANTARON A LA MADRE TIERRA: La banda fue el plato de fondo del show 'Voices for a Green L.A.'*, en el que también estuvieron la cantante de gospel Yolanda Adams, el grupo japonés Zenshuji Zendeko y el coro de mujeres Adaawe. *La Opinion*, p. 1B.

Abstract:

Además de los invitados estelares, el concierto presentó diferentes propuestas creativas. Desfilaron por el escenario originales cantantes, como el armenioamericano John Bilezikjian y el judío sefardita Cantor Haim Mizrahi; agrupaciones vocales como el Coro de Gospel Africano de la Iglesia Metodista Episcopal y el Coro Infantil de Los Angeles, y conjuntos de percusión como el Zenshuji Zendeko de Japón -- que ofreció un vibrante show donde combinó la música con el baile-- y el no menos llamativo grupo Adaaewe -- conformado por seis cantantes y percusionistas femeninas que mostraron un extraordinario dominio de sus exóticos instrumentos.

Empezaron con dos temas acústicos, de inclinación muy folklórica, pero se apoderaron enseguida de los instrumentos eléctricos para darle cuerda a Hearts Made of Stone, un cadencioso blues que incluirán en su próximo disco en estudio, y que en esta ocasión contó con el apoyo vocal de la excelente cantante del grupo Quetzal.

Cuando parecía que los asistentes habían decidido pasar el resto del concierto sin moverse de sus asientos, [Rosas] alzó la voz para preguntarles: "¿Se están divirtiendo?". Ante la respuesta afirmativa, exigió: "¡Pues demuéstrenlo!". Bastó esta frase para que todo el mundo se pusiera de pie y le entrara al baile, incluyendo a quienes acumulan ya incontables calendarios.

Darryl Morden (2002, February). *Cross-cultural Benefit Celebrates L.A. Hollywood Reporter*, 372, 14.

Abstract:

Observing the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's centennial and promoting energy-- efficient programs and products, Voices for a Green L.A. celebrated the city of quartz's diversity of culture and music - and hope for future generations - in a benefit concert Sunday at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. ...Also appearing was Sephardic cantor Haim Mizrahi with Armenian-American oud master and singer John Bilezikjian and the Los Angeles Children's Chorus. The Zenshuji Zendeko Japanese drumming group performed outside the theater earlier in the evening.

Getty Museum Previews Gladzor Gospels Exhibit during Festive Outreach Reception. (2001, July 7). *Armenian Reporter International*, p. 18.

Abstract:

"The manuscript tradition in Armenia lasted much longer than it did in Europe," [Thomas Kren] added. Getty conservator Nancy Turner spent one year working on the pages. Diane Brigham, Getty Education Director, described the variety of program events accompanying the exhibition: two free Sunday-afternoon lectures - Helen Evans of the Cloisters in NY on Sept. 16 and a gallery talk by artist Vahe Berberian Oct. 19 about the influence of manuscript art on his work. Storyteller Alidz Agabian, dancers, musician John Bilezikjian and others will perform at a free family festival Saturday, Oct. 20.

DON HECKMAN (2001, June 25). *Music Review; Middle Eastern Program Puts Focus on Inclusiveness*: [Home Edition]. *Los Angeles Times*, p. F.4.

Abstract:

Cultural "coexistence," at least, was fully present in the opening half of the program, "El Azahar" (named after the orange blossoms of El-Andalus), an exploration of flamenco and Arab music by the Del Montes and [John Bilezikjian]. The eight selections ranged from a solea and buleria to a rumba and Del Monte's own invention, sambule, a fusion of samba, flamenco and jazz. Joining the featured artists in various numbers were bassist Asaf del Monte, percussionist Patric Olivier, guitarist Tony Ybarra, flutist Roberto Dergara and the Del Montes' two sons, Enosh and Shaul, playing violin and cello.

Return of the masters: [1 Edition]. (2001, April 20). *The Southland Times*, p. 9.

Abstract:

He is sympathetically backed by the band Passenger, violinist Raffi Hakopian, and oud player and mandolinist John Bilezikjian, who combine to expand [Leonard Cohen]'s limited musical vocabulary. But the most telling contributions, as is often the case on his albums, come from the female backing vocals (here it's Jennifer Warnes and Sharon Robinson) which counterpoint his gravelly tones. The music has a European feel -- French boulevardier, Greek peasant, a touch of gypsy among the folky melodies and the songs themselves are, of course, exquisite and vivid. There are old favourites Bird On The Wire, So Long, Marianne and Hey, That's No Way To Say Goodbye; Field Commander with its line about "parachuting acid into diplomatic cocktail parties" ; Why Don't You Try ("Do you need to hold a leash to be a lady?"); and The Stranger Song, as mesmerising a lyric as has ever been written. This is OK as far as it goes, Leonard. Now, how about that new stuff?

John Bilezikjian Releases New Armenian Dance CD: "Armenian Connection". (2000, March 18). *Armenian Reporter International*, p. 22.

Abstract:

John Bilezikjian has released a new Armenian dance CD titled Armenian Connection. This CD features the talents of many Armenian musicians from across America.

DANNY FEINGOLD (1998, December 29). *She Preserves a Sephardic Legacy That Is Fading Fast; Music: Though Judy Frankel is of a different heritage, she has become a chronicler of the Jewish song*: [Home Edition]. *Los Angeles Times*, p. 2.

Abstract:

Some 35 years later, the singer is recognized as one of the leading interpreters of traditional Sephardic music. For the past decade, (Judy) Frankel has gathered songs from the descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jews exiled in 1492, recording four albums and touring extensively in the U.S. and Europe. Frankel's music--which can be heard tonight in a show called "The Sephardic Soul of Spain" at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre--is part of a growing fascination with Sephardic culture in Los Angeles (home to some

100,000 Sephardic Jews) and around the world. Some of the songs are delicate, mournful ballads accompanied only by Frankel's spare guitar. Others feature instrumentalists such as oud player John Bilezikjian (who will play with her tonight) and are suffused with the melodies and rhythms of North Africa and the Near East. A number of Frankel's songs date back to pre-expulsion Spain, evoking the medieval milieu in which Sephardic culture evolved.

DON HECKMAN (1997, April 11). *Klezmer Is More Than 'Fiddler on the Roof'; Music: The first KlezFest celebrates the music form, which is experiencing a revival far beyond the Jewish community*. [Home Edition]. *Los Angeles Times*, p. F, 14:4. .

Abstract:

But klezmer also is edgy, forward-looking groups such as the Klezmatics and tradition-oriented ensembles such as Brave Old World. It is the avant-garde tinged sounds of African American klezmer clarinetist Don Byron.

In celebration of that revival, CARS (Community Arts Resources), Yiddishkayt Los Angeles and the Skirball Cultural Center are sponsoring a 10-day series of klezmer events in the first KlezFest, tonight through April 20. The program's highlight event takes place tonight and Saturday, when the Klezmatics and Brave Old World appear in a UCLA Center for the Performing Arts concert at the Veterans Wadsworth Theater. Both groups were seen and heard with violinist Itzhak Perlman recently in a concert tour and the PBS special "In the Fiddler's House."

"Klezmer is happening right now," explains Aaron Paley of CARS. "Its revival in the last 20 years coincides with the interest in world music and in other cultures. And groups like the Klezmatics and Brave Old World, with their celebration of Yiddish music, bring Jewish roots into the 21st century."

* April 20: "Music of Wandering Peoples," featuring Barry Fisher, Zinovy Goro, John Bilezikjian and others. Ash Grove, 250 Santa Monica Pier, 7:30 p.m., (310) 656-8500.

Ounjian, Susan Dramian (1996, January 6). *The J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu Spotlights Armenian and Persian Cultures*. *Armenian Reporter International*, p. 18.

Abstract:

I've been waiting for some reporting in the Armenian papers and since no one covered this fantastic free event, open to the public, I felt I had to write (*). In conjunction with the fabulous exhibit of Biblical manuscripts from Persia, the downstairs garden pool area had three different weekend performances in October, November and December, with one remaining on January 7th. The beginning performers at 11:00 a.m. have been the fabulous John Bilezikjian Duo entertaining on the oud and the dumbeg. They delighted each audience with a concert of Armenian and Persian melodies. Following the great music, at 11:45 a.m. has been a most unique Persian Dance Group called The Nay-Nava Dance Theatre. They perform with beautiful sets and girls imitating life in the Persian harems. At 12:15 in the garden area behind the stage, the wonderful Alidz Aghbabian has been telling old Armenian stories. Her talent in this area captures the children as well as

the adults of every culture. At 1:00 p.m. on the stage by the small pool is Janine Vanitzian, Vahan Ounjian, my ten-year-old son, and myself, Susan Ounjian.

OULD MAN OUT: [Home Edition]. (1994, August 28). *Los Angeles Times* (pre-1997 Fulltext), p. 6.

Abstract:

John Bilezikjian is an undiscovered musical treasure ("Musician, Play Thyself," Palm Latitudes, by Joseph Hanania). Not only does he play more than 40 instruments, he is the world's foremost virtuoso on the oud.

Schwartz, G. B. (1993). *Creativity and synthesis in the music of John Bilezikjian: an Armenian-American oud player from Los Angeles*. Thesis (M.A.)--University of California, Los Angeles, 1993.

Abstract:

Masters Dissertation: *Creativity and synthesis in the music of John Bilezikjian : an Armenian-American oud player from Los Angeles*, by Gail Barbara Schwartz

JIM SCHMALTZ (1989, August 6). *Mandolin Music for the Classically Inclined: Don't expect bluegrass from this group*: [Valley Edition]. *Los Angeles Times* (pre-1997 Fulltext), p. 100.

Abstract:

Accompanying the mandolin orchestra at the Santa Monica performance will be soloist John Bilezikjian, who plays an obscure Persian instrument that dates back more than 2,000 years called the oud. Similar in shape to a mandolin but larger, it is more commonly heard accompanying belly dancing than in classical melodies. This is the second time Bilezikjian will have played with the orchestra, at [Joel Lish]'s request.

Incorporating a rare instrument such as the oud is the type of innovation that Lish sought to bring to the mandolin orchestra when he became its conductor. Through his efforts, the orchestra has built a library of 700 titles, and in 1979 it recorded and produced its only record album.

Lish explained that not only does the mandolin take on the role of the violin, but mandolin orchestras feature mandolin versions of other standard string instruments, such as the altomandola (in place of the viola), mandocellos and the upright mandobass.

HERBERT J. VIDA (1986, March 6). *Few Have Heard of the Oud, but Virtuoso Doesn't Brood*: [Orange County Edition]. *Los Angeles Times* (pre-1997 Fulltext), p. 2.

Abstract:

[John Bilezikjian] feels he was born to play the oud, an 11-string, pear-shaped instrument developed 2,000 years ago in Persia and traditionally played with an eagle's feather attached to a pick. It sounds something like a cross between a lute and a soulful guitar.

Is this any way for a performer of classical Middle Eastern music to behave? After all, he's played major oud concerts in Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and at UCLA. Raised on traditional classical pieces, Bilezikjian feels that while that training is still valuable, it now must be tempered by "whatever I feel like playing. If it happens to be country music, it's country music I play."

Confident that he is a world-class oud player-"technically, no one can touch me"-Bilezikjian makes his own ground rules to perform what he feels is right for the moment. "I have no restrictions," he said. For instance, in concert, he once played Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez" and followed with a medley of tunes from "Chariots of Fire," "E.T." and "Star Wars."

Cabaret, Armenian-Style, Returns to Detroit Area. (1995, December 9). *Armenian Reporter International*, p. 15.

Abstract:

The Cabaret will be a special evening of dining and entertainment and will bring back an outstanding musical ensemble for an encore presentation. The John Bilezikjian Ensemble features the oud artistry of John Bilezikjian, vocals by Helen Bilezikjian, Mal Barsamian on clarinet, Jack Zarzatian on guitar and Vaughn Masropian on dumbeg. According to the Cabaret Chairwoman, Mrs. Charlene Apigian, the Cabaret Chairwoman, Mrs. Charlene Apigian, the Cabaret held in January 1994 was such a hit that she was inundated with requests to present it again. The Cabaret Committee is hard at work on this encore presentation, which will be held at St. John's Armenian Cultural Building. The musicians, who come from California, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Michigan, will provide the entertainment and music for the entire evening.

Recordings – John Bilezikjian

John Bilezikjian has produced twenty-five albums. A full list can be found on this website: <http://www.dantzrecords.com/catalog.html>. He has also participated in numerous collaborative recordings. The following is a list of some of his work that would be of specific interest to you and this grant:

- Bilezikjian, J. (2008). *All-Time Armenian Favorites*. Allegro Corporation.
- Bucovina Klezmer. (2003). *Bucovina Klezmer and friends play Jewish music*. Santa Monica, CA: Miller Music.
- National Geographic Society (U.S.). (2002). *Romance love is everywhere*. Around the world music series. [San Francisco, Calif.]: Sugo Music.
- Durst, J., Maroghini, Fischer, J., Noguib, A., Sebastian, J., Joyce, M., et al. (2002). *Element of surprise*. [S.l.]: WorldWind.
- Diabate_, P., Bilezikjian, J., Brook, M., Hakmoun, H., & Manga, A. (2001). *New life*. Woodland Hills, CA: Sunrise Records.
- *Acustico*. (2000). Venice, Calif: Condor Records.
- Middle East Ensemble (University of California, Santa Barbara), Satta_r, Heydari, M., Pouian, S., Ishmael, Bilezikjian, J., et al. (1998). *UCSB Middle East Ensemble*. Santa Barbara, Calif: UC Regents.
- Frankel, J., Bilezikjian, J., Lustig, G., & Tenney, G. (1998). *Tresoros sephardis*. San Francisco, Calif: J. Frankel.
- Frankel, J., Bilezikjian, J., & Lustig, G. (1997). *Silver & gold Plata y oro*. New York: s.n.].
- Bilezikjian, J. (1994). *Music from the Armenian Diaspora played on the oud*. New York, N.Y.: Global Village Music.
- Canto Antiguo (Musical group), & Bilezikjian, J. (1993). *A mediaeval view of Judeo-Spanish song*. Somerville, Mass: Titanic.
- Frankel, J. (1992). *Sephardic songs of love and hope; Canticas Sephardis de amor y experansa*. New York: Global Village Music.
- Bilezikjian, J., Abadi, M., Brotman, S., Longstreth, T., Beethoven, L. v., Bach, J. S., et al. (1988). *Moonlight sonata*. Los Angeles, CA: Discovery Records.
- Bilezikjian, J., Bilezikjian, J., Rodrigo, J., & Bach, J. S. (1978). *The art of the oud*. S.l: s.n.