

# 30th Anniversary of the Little Singers of Armenia

*Marine Margaryan, Pianist and pedagogue, Armenia*

*“These children sing so flawlessly that they infuriate even God.” Cosmos Galilaes, Artistic Director and Conductor Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra, 1996*

*“What Tigran Hekekyan presents here on the stage is impossible to achieve on earth, such a performance is only possible in the Heavens.” Gido Kokars, Professor at the Latvian Academy of Music, Founder and Conductor of the Ave Sol Choir, Latvia, 2016*



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For over thirty years the Little Singers of Armenia, founded by Maestro Tigran Hekekyan, has been an internationally acclaimed chorus that has captured hearts across the world.

Today we celebrate alongside them as we revisit a long list of their accomplishments and a heartwarming story of dedication and love through unparalleled challenges.

Barely three years after the ensemble's inception, in 1995 during the post-Soviet era, while conditions were unraveling in Armenia, the choir embarked on an important and demanding fifty-day concert tour. During the tour, it performed in Poland, Belgium, Germany, France, Switzerland, the European Festival of Youth Choirs in Basel, and in 20 states across the USA. It was invited to perform for UNESCO's 50th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Charter. Before reaching its third year the Little Singers of Armenia had already won two gold and one silver medal, as well as the Grand Prix during the Golden Gate International Children's Choral Festival in San Francisco.

From the start, Little Singers of Armenia was received with resounding praise and admiration. This reputation, the heart of its legacy, would be upheld throughout its decades of performing and on renowned stages across the world, such as the Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall, the Victoria Hall in Geneva, the Konserthuset in Stockholm, and the Berliner Philharmoniker Concert Hall, Opéra Garnier in Paris, etc.

*"There is no chorus in Israel with such quality. Perhaps nowhere in the world. Such professionalism, love towards art and music that is conveyed from the performer to the audience. You are world-class musicians and it is a great honor for us to have the opportunity to listen to you. We are grateful." Rita Vinokur, Head Rehovot Conservatory of Music Chair, Cultural Department, Rehovot, 2017*

*"It was fantastic. I have attended many concerts, but I have never listened to such flawless music, perfect execution, and illuminating voices... let me say that in Heaven it can't be*

*better.” Rev. Thomas Roedder, Saint Moritz, Switzerland, 2016*

*“All the choir conductors who were present at your concerts conveyed to us that they have never heard a choir with such quality and perhaps never will in the future. This was like a miracle which took place in their life.” Ieva Krivickaitė, Director, Ugnele Children’s Choir, 2019*

*“I always say to my singers that we should always strive for excellence but not perfection, because perfection does not exist. But today, having listened to the Little Singers of Armenia I realized that perfection sometimes exists” André Ducret, Founder and Conductor of the Saint Michel Choir, Fribourg, Switzerland, 2016*

*“Amazing choir. I hardly ever come across such choirs. You are not only singers but also high-quality artists. It is no wonder now that you are called the ambassadors of Armenian music.” Soulyus Lausa, Conductor, Director, National Cultural Center of Lithuania, 2019*



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In 2001, the choir would be recognized as an important ambassador by the European Federation of Choirs of the Union which granted the choir the honorary title of “The Cultural Ambassadors of Europe.” But perhaps the greatest achievement for Maestro Tigran Hekekyan might have come in 2002 when the International Federation for Choral Music invited the Little Singers of Armenia to participate in the Sixth World Symposium in Minneapolis. It was one of only twenty best choirs from around the world invited to perform.

The Little Singers of Armenia became widely recognized for its colorful repertoire from ancient music, 5th century Armenian spiritual chants and hymns to complicated 21st century works, medieval works, Western classical music, popular songs from around the world, and jazz. In a short time, the children’s choir had reached a remarkably high level of artistry and professionalism – easily keeping pace with well-established professional choruses.

As a result, the choir became a highly sought-after ensemble for many contemporary composers. This led to many new pieces which would forever alter the musical landscape for choral

music. These newly written works would stretch boundaries for choruses and generate new possibilities for composers – often raising the bar too high for the other choruses around the world. Even in these extreme musical settings, Little Singers of Armenia would perform these demanding pieces with ease and clarity. With emotion that was uniquely its own, genuinely manifested by every member on stage, creating a unified and sublime sound.

*“The choir sings very soulfully and emotionally. The pronunciation is very beautiful, the sound is wonderful. While singing, everyone’s eyes tell a little story.” Gunter Berger, Director, Dresden Philharmonic Choir, 2019*

*“This choir is one of the greatest choirs in the world. The Little Singers of Armenia stands out for the love, warmth, enthusiasm, and joy towards each other. This is why they are so exceptional. The conductor is wonderful. He is capable of creating a musical dialogue between the audience and the singers. He is one of the five best conductors I know.” Bo Johansson, Artistic Director and Conductor of the Adolf Fredrik Girls Choir, Stockholm, Sweden, 2012*

*“I am aware of the high quality of this choir. But I cannot imagine how they manage to constantly strive for even higher quality. This choir, simply, is just perfect.” Michel Hostettler, Composer, Conductor, Vevey, Switzerland, 2016*

Today, the choir is one of the best in the world due to its special leadership under Maestro Hekekyan. As a result, he has become a sought-after pedagogue whose methods for engaging youth and leading choruses have been spreading rapidly across the international musical community. His leadership, through constant cultural changes and varying interests of support for

classical music, demonstrates what is possible when one's work is fortified with love and also a relentless amount of commitment.

While Tigran is often credited for his professional approach, his work with the choir is multi-dimensional and holistic. He describes it as:

The Little Singers of Armenia is first and foremost a state of mind, a collective unity, an assembly of people of the same worldview. A family, in the real and traditional sense of the word, where there are clear demarcated human and moral standards. Here, every member of the family works together. The older tries to help and mentor the younger, the younger taking example from the older. It is like a microcosmic world, where there is hierarchy, discipline, law, and order, all delineated by the members of the choir. However, in contrast to the world, where things are resolved by force, where connections and channels of influence provide underserving leverages, and where competition blurs standards and morals, the choir works honestly and harmoniously. Here, choices are made only after skills have been evaluated. When children join, their only true responsibility is to grow into educated and valued citizens in our community and world. They learn to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, not only during performances but in all life situations. In the Little Singers of Armenia, the children learn about love, living fully, appreciating nature, and the history of their homeland.

My most cherished moments are during concerts, seeing the children's sparkling eyes radiant under the sounds of Bach, Fauré, and Komitas. I watch every one of their movements as they stand together on the stage. It is important to me because I see their love. Their love for each other and their love for the planet. I feel their veneration and love for their homeland, Armenia, that shows that they will continue to honor our age-old musical heritage which has lasted since the third millennium BCE.

If you long to visit your childhood, connect to your most sincere aspirations, or want to rediscover lost emotions or deeply seated memories, you will find it with Little Singers of Armenia. You will experience a deep amount of love flowing through it and around it. You will be mystified by the children and the music. You will be absorbed and it will mean everything to you and it does me.



*"This choir is a congenial world, woven by the multicolor threads of aspirations and dreams, very different from gloomy reality." Sveta Barsegyan, 15 years old, II soprano, Little Singers of Armenia*

*"The choir is a plant where the most precious and warm*

*memories of my childhood are ingrained. The choir is a school of life where I was taught to love and appreciate, to struggle and never despair, be fair and just like music itself.” Lilit Ginosyan, Former member of Little Singers of Armenia*

Today, after thirty years, the choir thrives due to its devoted conductor and founder Maestro Tigran Hekekyan. We celebrate with him wholeheartedly. What once started as a dream has now transformed generations of children and inspired listeners across the world. The boundless love within this choir, and around it, encircles everything with goodwill for all people for all time’s sake. It is a solid stepping stone for the advent of new and numerous musical ambassadors and a powerful model for peace around the globe.

**Congratulations on your 30 years, Little Singers of Armenia!**

*“. . . You have an enormous power to change reality. It is a lesson for me personally and for all the people who heard you tonight, for people who need what you do, in order to change reality.” George-Emmanuel Lazaridis, Renowned Pianist & Composer, Artistic Director, Thessaloniki Concert Hall Organization, 2015*



**Marine Margaryan** is a pianist, pedagogue, accompanist, winner of many international competitions, and author of many articles and publications. She has performed all around Armenia and abroad, participated in a number of prestigious international events and festivals in Greece, Lebanon, Egypt, Iran, France, Switzerland, Germany, Japan, the USA, Italy, Latvia etc. Marine Margaryan has performed as a pianist with



different musicians, ensembles, and choirs. Marine Margaryan is a lecturer in piano and professor at the Komitas State Conservatory, as well as teaching at the Sayat-Nova and P. Tchaikovsky Schools of Music. Marine Margaryan's students win high awards in various international competitions and are included in the various foundations and targeted programs. Marine Margaryan lives an active daily life, creates in various fields, is busy with the upbringing of her four children, two of whom are trying to find their path in music as a cellist and oboist.

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*Original article translated by Ara Ghazarian*