

# TEAS

M A G A Z I N E



Culture | Public Affairs | Business



Photo: Aynur Badalova

## NOVRUZ CELEBRATED IN AZERBAIJAN

Also in this issue:

President Ilham Aliyev pays an official visit to France

Khojaly Art Prize awarded in Paris

Leonie Mergen brings the Karabakh-Collection to European runways

Mukhtar Kazimoglu – keeping folklore alive

Leyla Begim – poetry and prose from the heart

04 / 2017

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# Welcome to the TEAS Magazine

The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS) is a UK-registered pan-European foundation dedicated to raising awareness of Azerbaijan and fostering closer economic, political and cultural links between that country and the nations of Europe.

As well as promoting the positive aspects of Azerbaijan, TEAS also highlights the plight of the 875,000 refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the country. These people are unable to return to their homes and lands because of the illegal occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts by Armenia's armed forces – in defiance of four UN Security Council resolutions.

## TEAS has three main facets to its operations:

- Culture – TEAS raises awareness of Azerbaijan's rich and vibrant culture to a worldwide audience by organising cultural events and operating as a networking centre.
- Business – TEAS supports its membership of European and Azerbaijani businesses. It provides a platform for organisations to establish links and strengthen their existing business relationships via a programme of networking opportunities across the regions.
- Public Affairs – TEAS works to increase awareness about Azerbaijan amongst key opinion-formers, key decision-makers and other political, academic and civil society stakeholders.

## In pursuit of its objectives TEAS:

- Organises meetings with interested parties, opinion-formers and decision-makers
- Arranges roundtables, seminars, lectures and conferences
- Publishes pamphlets, reports, bulletins, books and produces films
- Facilitates fact-finding trips by politicians and business people.

## Facebook

The TEAS Facebook page is your chance to learn about the latest news, events, campaigns and other Azerbaijan-related items. Visit and 'like' our page at: <http://bit.ly/TEASFB>.

## Membership and Sponsorship

TEAS offers a range of corporate and individual membership packages, providing such benefits as advertising, trade missions, networking, business sector advice and hotel discounts.

TEAS also offers numerous sponsorship opportunities throughout the year for its events and conferences. To find out more, e-mail: [membership@teas.eu](mailto:membership@teas.eu).

## Win £100 of Amazon vouchers!

Firstly, our congratulations go to Rovlan Mammadov of the Cass Business School, City University, who is winner of the competition in the March 2017 edition.

To stand a chance of winning £100 of Amazon vouchers, simply answer the following 10 questions, the answers to which will be found in this issue of the magazine. In the case of a tie, a draw will be made. Previous winners are ineligible to enter, as are TEAS employees and their families. Please send all entries to [editor@teas.eu](mailto:editor@teas.eu) by 17.00hrs (GMT) on 8 May:

1. Which French company is spearheading exploitation of the Umid gas field?
2. What does the acronym TRACECA stand for?
3. On what date did France recognise renewed Azerbaijani independence?
4. When did Alexandre Dumas visit the Caucasus?
5. How many times has French President François Hollande visited Azerbaijan?
6. Who was the winner of the *Ses Azerbaycan (Voice of Azerbaijan)* television talent show?
7. In which year was Novruz added to the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity?
8. Which artist won the Khojaly Art Prize – France?
9. Which UK-based Azerbaijani tar player illustrated the lecture on future developments in mugham given by Dr Sanubar Baghirova?
10. Who is the Director of the Institute of Folklore under the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS)?

## Upcoming Event For full details of all TEAS events, go to [www.teas.eu/upcomingevents](http://www.teas.eu/upcomingevents)

12 April

Screening: *Young Voices, Ancient Song (Paris)*

19.30hrs Cinéma L'Entrepôt, 7/9 rue François Pressensé, 75014 Paris

RSVP to [paris@teas.eu](mailto:paris@teas.eu)

Programmed as part of the annual *L'Europe autour de l'Europe* festival, this TEAS film, directed by Jeffrey Werbock, President, Mugham Society of America, is being showcased alongside works old and new by such great cineastes as Carlos Saura, Jean-Luc Godard, Volker Schlöndorff and Andrej Wajda.

Having learned that many young Azerbaijanis, including small children, are capable of performing the most sophisticated form of Azerbaijani national music, known as mugham, Jeffrey organised an expedition to Azerbaijan to interview and film the remarkable phenomenon of young mugham singers and instrumentalists. The children of Karabakh – currently under Armenian occupation – are regarded as being particularly talented at performing this complex art form. This fascinating and emotional documentary depicts the young Azerbaijanis and their devotion to keeping mugham alive.





Lionel Zetter,  
Director,  
TEAS

## From the TEAS Director

After the sombre series of events to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Khojaly tragedy, the Novruz celebrations raised our spirits. Novruz is an ancient festival of renewal, marked every spring throughout Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev made an official visit to Paris to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Franco-Azerbaijani relations. France is one of the three Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group that is tasked with finding a peaceful solution to the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. France is also a major trading partner with Azerbaijan.

Also in Paris an event was held to mark the presentation of the Khojaly Arts Prize. The winning entry by Vugar Quliyev depicted the souls of the departed being transported away amidst a Fauvist phantasmagorical representation of the Khojaly landscape.

This issue of *TEAS Magazine* features an interview with Leonie Mergen. Her highly-acclaimed Karabakh-Collection was shown during Berlin Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week and also at London Fashion Week. This issue also contains an interview with Dr Mukhtar Kazimoglu, Director of the Institute of Folklore under ANAS, which has published a nine-volume work *Karabakh – Folklore is also a History*, collected orally from some of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from this Armenian-occupied territory.

I was very honoured to be asked to address the *Energy from the Past to Future* exhibition at the UN Office in the Palais des Nations in Geneva. This featured a stunning photographic exhibition depicting the very earliest days of the oil revolution in and around Baku in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century – right up to the state-of-the-art drilling, pumping and pipeline operations of today – as well as the alternative energy technologies of the future.

**Lionel Zetter**  
Director, TEAS



Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady and Vice-President Mehriban Aliyeva enter the Elysée Palace, accompanied by French President François Hollande

## 25 years of Franco–Azerbaijani relations: President Aliyev makes an official visit to France

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev paid an official visit to France to commemorate 25 years of Franco–Azerbaijani relations from 12–14 March. Having touched down at Orly airport, he was greeted by numerous high-ranking French officials before embarking on a punishing schedule of business meetings.

This began with a meeting with Richard Marry, President, Vivaction Company, which specialises in cybersecurity. He then exchanged views with Marie-Ange Debon, Vice-President, Movement of the Enterprises of France (MEDEF) and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, SUEZ Environnement, particularly focusing on current projects aimed at enhancing water quality and the level of waste management. President Ilham Aliyev then went on to meet Hervé Guillou, Chairman and Chief Executive, DCNS, which designs, produces and supports submarines and surface ships and is already collaborating with the Baku Shipyard project. The nautical theme continued during a meeting with Gilles Rémy, Chairman and CEO, CIFAL Group, which focused on the construction of ships for military and technical purposes.

Dialogue with Xavier Musca, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Crédit Agricole, focused on another priority topic – the \$45bn Southern Gas Corridor – which is destined to bring Azerbaijani Caspian Gas to Europe from 2020, for which the bank has provided significant levels of funding via an excellent relationship with the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR). The sides also discussed co-operation prospects in the non-oil sector, aimed at diversifying the economy.

The exchanges with Nicolas Chamussy, Executive Vice-President, Space Systems: Airbus Defence and Space Division, focused on further satellite

developments. Azerbaijan has launched two communications satellites, to date, with the support of French technology. It is now the communications hub of the region, and looking to launch further satellites of this kind.

Following the development of the Transport Corridor Europe–Caucasus–Asia (TRACECA), Azerbaijan has been transformed into a regional logistics and communications centre. Rail transportation formed the basis of the discussions with Raphaël Eskinazi, President, Thalès International.

Over more than 20 years, TOTAL has played an integral role in exploration and extraction of Azerbaijani oil and gas. In particular, it is spearheading the exploitation of the Absheron gas field, where it is collaborating with ENGIE and SOCAR. Patrick Pouyanne, Chairman and Chief Executive, TOTAL, discussed current collaborations with Azerbaijan and the recent explorations that have been undertaken on the Umid gas field. Later, on 13 March, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met members of the MEDEF Business Council, focusing on opportunities for French business in both the oil and non-oil sectors.

On 14 March, the formal political element of the official visit began, with a meeting between the President and Gérard Larcher, President, French Senate. This was followed by discussions with Claude Bartolone, President, French National Assembly, who hailed the development of co-operation between the countries and added that such visits contribute to bilateral relations. He also outlined the excellent business co-operation between the countries and explained that France remains supportive of the peaceful resolution of the Armenian–Azerbaijani

conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. President Aliyev hailed the achievements of the Azerbaijan–France Friendship Group, and outlined the outcome of his meetings with MEDEF, which covered areas of co-operation across various fields, including transportation, agriculture and the space and communications industries.

He made reference to French participation in the construction of the Southern Gas Corridor; the depth of cultural exchange between Azerbaijan and France; and the educational work undertaken by the French lycée and university in Azerbaijan. When speaking of the ongoing conflict with Armenia, he expressed his frustration with the work of the OSCE Minsk Group – of which France is a Co-Chair – which has been tasked with establishing a negotiated peace to the conflict, yet has achieved nothing since its establishment in 1994. He requested greater French impetus in resolving the conflict. The meeting culminated with the President extending an invitation to Mr Barolone to visit Azerbaijan.

Thereafter, President Aliyev exchanged views with French President François Hollande at the Elysée Palace. This culminated with an official dinner that was attended by Marie-Laetitia Gourdin, Director, TEAS France, alongside around 100 dignitaries, including H.E. Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France; H.E. Aurélie Bouchez, French Ambassador to Azerbaijan; Harlem Désir, French Minister of European Affairs; Laurent Fabius, French Minister of Foreign Affairs; Pierre Thilloz, composer of the *Khojaly 613* tone poem; *National Geographic* photographer Reza; MP Jean-François Mancel, President of the Association of the Friends of Azerbaijan; Senator Nathalie Goulet, Vice-Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee, French Senate; and Senator André Reichardt, President, France–Caucasus Group, French Senate.

In the role of host, French President Hollande stated: “France was effectively one of the first states to recognise Azerbaijani independence on 3 January

1992. I speak of recognising the ‘restoration of Azerbaijani independence’ because the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (ADR) was founded on 28 May 1918 – celebrated each year as an Azerbaijani national holiday – and existed until April 1920.

“A few days ago, we celebrated International Women’s Day, and I recall that Azerbaijan under the ADR was one of the first countries in the world to extend the franchise to all adult women.

“There has always been an excellent business relationship between our two countries, dating back to the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries, thanks to the Silk Road that passed through Azerbaijan, with the first French travellers visiting the country from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

“The cultural links continued with the ancient tradition of French Orientalism, which began with Barthélémy d’Herbelot, who ranked amongst the first westerners to study the literature in your country, which was included in his great work *Oriental Library, or a Universal Dictionary containing everything necessary to understand the Oriental Peoples* from 1697.

“However, Alexandre Dumas was one of the first to make your country known in France by describing Baku in his book *Voyage in the Caucasus*, written from 1858–59. Since then, our two countries have developed solid and cordial relations, enabling us to discuss all subjects, without exception.

“You have an ambition for your country – to consolidate its independence and diversify its partners. It is this spirit that accompanies the perspective of a new accord between Azerbaijan and the EU. I have stated elsewhere that the negotiations started in Brussels one month ago should be concluded as quickly as possible.

“Notably, France is one of your principal clients in the hydrocarbon sector. I particularly acknowledge the long-term partnership between TOTAL and SOCAR regarding exploitation of the gas deposits



The meeting with Gérard Larcher, President, French Senate was friendly and forthcoming

in Absheron.

“Mr President, numerous French businesses are ready to provide their expertise and capabilities in the areas of transportation, tourism, the environment, security, urban development and agriculture. I know you have had many meetings since arriving in France, and numerous agreements have been signed in your presence.”

After making reference to the educational and cultural links between the countries, President Hollande commented on the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, saying: “I would like to conclude with a call for peace and stability. It has taken too long to establish an end to the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Negotiations have continued for 23 years, yet the parties have not achieved resolution. Nothing about the status quo and a conflict that is never really frozen could justify the confrontation that occurred in April 2016 and had ramifications for several weeks afterwards.

“You know that France, with the Russian and US Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, is seeking a solution. I wish to inform you that, when I met Armenian President Sargsyan in Paris, I reiterated that there could be no military solution to the conflict.

“With the US and Russia, France is attempting to keep the doors of mediation open. We reiterate the necessity for the non-use of force, respect for the territorial integrity of states and the right of self-determination. In this respect, France is ready to take every initiative.

“Mr President, your presence in Paris today marks a new stage in our longstanding relationship. For Azerbaijan, France is always an open and frank partner and wishes to increase its exchanges and play its role in achieving security and stability



President İlham Aliyev discusses the latest explorations on the Umid gas field with Patrick Pouyanne, Chairman and Chief Executive, TOTAL



in the region. I toast you, in the name of friendship.”

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev warmly replied, saying: “It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the high level of political relations that exist between Azerbaijan and France. I have visited France many times. You, the French President, have visited Azerbaijan twice. These reciprocal visits bear testament to the high level of Franco–Azerbaijani relations. Between us, we have created very active political dialogue, and I am delighted that my visit coincides with the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.



President Ilham Aliyev discusses opportunities in the non-oil sector with members of the MEDEF Business Council

“France is one of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, tasked with achieving resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the most regrettable problem in the region. Due to Armenian military aggression, 20 per cent of Azerbaijani territory – comprising Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions – remains under occupation. Due to a policy of ethnic cleansing, more than a million citizens are now refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).



President Ilham Aliyev commented on the ongoing and exponentially increasing level of business and cultural engagement between the countries



The two Presidents observe the signing of documents on their behalf by H.E. Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France and H.E. Aurélie Bouchez, French Ambassador to Azerbaijan

“Four UN Security Council resolutions have been passed regarding the conflict, as have decisions and resolutions by the UN General Assembly, the OSCE, NATO, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Non-Aligned Movement and Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, together with other important international organisations.

“This conflict can be regarded as unique in the way it flouts the norms of both international law and Azerbaijani territorial integrity. The status quo is unacceptable. Like the other OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, France has stated its position many times. Unfortunately, Armenia still continues to ignore all calls to end its policy of occupation. Nagorno-Karabakh is ancient and historic Azerbaijani land and, in that sense, the territorial integrity of our land cannot possibly be the object of negotiations.

“The economic relations between Azerbaijan and France are rapidly developing. French businesses are currently participating in 27 projects worth \$2bn (£1.66bn) in the sectors of energy, aerospace, transportation, water supply, agriculture and other areas. Energy supply is one of the principal areas of

economic relations. French businesses are participating in projects being undertaken in the oil and gas sectors. The Southern Gas Corridor will be particularly important in ensuring European energy security.

“There is also a high level of co-operation in the humanitarian sector. The French language has been taught in Azerbaijan for many years. Approximately 50,000 students are currently learning French in 338 educational establishments, including higher educational establishments, across Azerbaijan. The Victor Hugo Centre for French Language and Literature has been



French President Hollande pledged an expansion of French involvement in diversification of the Azerbaijani economy and an upscaling of French efforts to resolve the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh

established at Baku Slavic University. There is also a French language centre at the Azerbaijani University of Foreign Languages. Also, three years have passed since the creation of the French Lycée in Baku, the opening of which was attended by you, the French President. During the past year, the Franco–Azerbaijani University opened its doors.

“Simultaneously, we have undertaken cultural co-operation with great success. Decentralised co-operation between France and Azerbaijan has been undertaken. Such documents have been signed between 14 Azerbaijani towns and, in France, 12 towns and one province.

“I toast your health, to sincere friendship and the development of mutually beneficial co-operation between Azerbaijan and France.”

## Novruz joy celebrated in London

Dating back to the Zoroastrian period, Novruz is a traditional Eastern festival of spring that starts at the exact moment of the vernal equinox. During the four weeks preceding Novruz, each Tuesday is dedicated to one of the four elements – water, fire, wind and earth. Celebrations include jumping over bonfires to eradicate the bad aspects of the past year and look to the future, the making of national pastries, such as shekerbura and pakhlava, tending the graves of relatives, and egg decoration.

In Azerbaijan, there is a five-day national holiday, the main day being 21 May, which has been recognised by the UN General Assembly as the International Day of Novruz. This includes folk dancing and festive feasts, the centrepiece of which is samani, which comprises green shoots from wheat seeds. In 2009, UNESCO added Novruz to the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Celebrations began on 17 March at the Azerbaijani Embassy in the UK, attended by around 100 people. Mrs Ulviyye Taghizade, wife of H.E. Tahir Taghizade, Azerbaijani Ambassador to the UK, opened the event by saying: "I am delighted to welcome you all to celebrate Novruz Bayrami here at the Embassy, and wish to thank all ladies who have helped prepare the celebratory table." She went on to reveal plans to open an Azerbaijani language conversation club at the Embassy and to launch an Azerbaijani Ladies' Club under the auspices of the International Women's Association.

Following that, on 19 March, Azeri Music London hosted a lively event at the Sangam Centre in Edgware attended by around 170, featuring a range of UK-based musicians and singers. The main star was a visitor from Baku – Emiliya Yagubova (known under the stage name of Emiliya), winner of the *Ses Azerbaijan (Voice of Azerbaijan)* television talent show. Formerly part of the Rast Jazz Group, she is now a staff singer for AzTV. She wowed the crowds with the strength of her voice, performing a rich blend of international pop hits and Azerbaijani popular and folk music, including Zulfiya Khanbabayeva's *Sensiz*. The other performers were Malik Azeri (singer/percussion), Babek Atesh (tar), Saber Ibrahim (keyboards) and Tahaty (dancer).

## MoU: Baku Business Factory and TransTech Capital

Professor Dr Alovzat Muslumov, Director, Baku Business Factory (BBF) has outlined the development of international relations aimed at establishing support for access of startups to the international market, stressing that international mutually beneficial information exchange remains a priority. He commented: "For this purpose, we have organised numerous meetings with the representatives of governments and companies, and are happy to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with TransTech Capital. The main subjects of our agreement – training programmes, mentoring services, future deal flowshare, funding, potential future co-investment, technological support and other collaborative opportunities are important factors, not only for startups, but also for BBF itself, in terms of development and the utilisation of international experience."

Simon Robeson, Main Partner, TransTech Capital, explained: "In the UK, we invest in start-ups and in businesses at a later stage of development, and have been active in this sector since 1983."

He stated that the signing of the MoU signifies the desire and commitment from both parties to make available their respective knowledge and networks for the benefit of innovative companies in Azerbaijan and to support each other in this endeavour. Simon commented: "The combination of TransTech Capital and the expertise of the Baku Business Factory potentially can provide the vital ingredients 'to make great soup'."

Baroness Emma Nicholson, UK Prime Ministerial Trade Envoy to Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Iraq, underlined the successful development of Azerbaijan. She stressed that Azerbaijan and the UK



Emiliya Yagubova, winner of the *Ses Azerbaijan (Voice of Azerbaijan)* television talent show, headlined at the largest Novruz event, hosted in the UCL quadrangle

The biggest celebration in the UK took place at the quadrangle of University College London (UCL) on 26 March. Now in its eighth year, the Central Asian Spring Festival featured food, stalls, songs and dances from across the countries that celebrate Novruz, including Emiliya as a late addition to the programme, who captivated the hundreds in attendance.

Much the same vein was adopted one day later at the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which began with stalls in the foyer representing all member countries that celebrate Novruz. Azerbaijan was represented by Parvin Musayeva, Associate, SME F&D, who brought along a selection of kelagayi (Azerbaijani shawls/headscarves). This was followed by performances of songs and dances from many countries.

have extensive ties and have developed a culture of co-operation that is expanding on an exponential basis. Baroness Nicholson noted that the Baku Business Factory remains the birthplace for new ideas, and serves to stimulate startups for young people. According to her, this MoU will contribute towards the development of ties between the two countries.

The Baku Business Factory was established in May 2015 by Anar Alizade, the main objective being to support youth business initiatives and to develop commercially-minded young people with ideas, and provide them with the financial base to help develop new concepts in Azerbaijan. BBF has recently started a technology unit that aims to focus on helping young people with new ideas and projects based on innovative science and engineering intellectual property.



## Energy from past to future showcased in the UN Headquarters in Geneva

The Permanent Azerbaijani Mission to the UN Office in Geneva, in collaboration with TEAS, have organised a photographic exhibition entitled *Energy from the Past to Future: Azerbaijan Through the Lens* at the open space area of the UN Headquarters in Geneva. This formed part of a wider exhibition hosted by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). This showcases the innovations being implemented by UNECE member countries, aimed at achieving a more sustainable energy future for successive generations.

The exhibition comprises a selection of pictures provided by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, the Azerbaijani State Agency for Renewable and Alternative Energy, and TEAS. In over 60 photos specifically selected for this exhibition, Azerbaijan describes its progression during the transition from traditional oil and gas energy to the utilisation of alternative and renewable energy resources. The pictures also illustrate Azerbaijani landscapes, society and energy infrastructural development.

The official opening ceremony was held at the Palais des Nations – the UN Headquarters in Geneva – in the presence of members of the UNECE Sustainable Energy Committee, and representatives of Permanent Missions to the UN, international organisations and civil society.

The exhibition was opened by Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, UNECE, who acknowledged the efforts of UNECE member countries towards achieving a more sustainable energy future, and in particular the energy transition being implemented in Azerbaijan, Germany, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, which are featured in the exhibition. He underlined that it is only through the replication of successful national case studies, and by learning and sharing with each other, that countries can deliver on the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

Representatives of participating countries took the floor to present their respective exhibitions, namely Dr Uwe Petry, Head, Economic Affairs Division in Germany; H.E. Ambassador Vaqif Sadiqov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN; Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS; Ramazan Zhampiissov, Executive Director, KazEnergy Association, Kazakhstan, and Valeriy Pysarenko, Ukrainian MP.

Ambassador Sadiqov mentioned the long history of energy infrastructure development in Azerbaijan, and its impact on overall life in the country, explaining: “The government of Azerbaijan is putting a considerable amount of effort into economic diversification and the development of the non-oil sectors, such as transport infrastructure, ICT, agriculture, and tourism. Another priority of the country is to make the transition towards a more diversified

energy mix, which includes alternative and renewable energy infrastructures for wind and solar power. In that regard, Azerbaijan continues its partnership with relevant international organisations and companies.”

In his speech, Mr Zetter stressed: “Energy is the lifeblood of every economy. It is also a vital sector for Azerbaijan, which is a substantial



Two attendees explore a photographic history of the first mechanised oil extraction and transportation, brought to Azerbaijan by innovators commissioned by the Branobel (Nobel Brothers) oil company in the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century

exporter of both oil and gas. However, Azerbaijan is also looking to the future. It is working hard to diversify its economy, and investing substantial resources into developing alternative and renewable energy technologies. Today, we showcase more than 60 pictures. Half represent the country’s energy infrastructure, from oil and gas to renewable technologies, powered by wind and solar energy. The other half of are taken from the TEAS competition portfolio *Azerbaijan Through the Lens*, and they evocatively illustrate the country’s landscapes and culture.”



Ambassador Sadiqov spoke of the government-led drive towards effective and efficient economic diversification in Azerbaijan

## Dentons on renewable energy projects

Dentons – a TEAS member company – has launched the 2017 edition of its *Investing in Renewable Energy Projects in Europe* guide. The renewable energy market is never static as technical advances and the increased prevalence of competitive tendering mechanisms are driving down costs globally. Changes in political and economic conditions can trigger regulatory changes that transform the climate for such projects in a country overnight – and not always for the better.

Across Europe as a whole, the renewables industry continues to expand and develop. One section of this Dentons publication specifically deals with the Azerbaijani renewables situation. The country is replete with wave, wind and solar energy, and this

has led to the establishment of the Azerbaijani State Agency for Alternative and Renewable Energy, which is masterminding a \$330m (£264.7m) project to commission an elevated 200MW wind farm in the Caspian Sea. This should reduce natural gas demand by at least 200,000m<sup>3</sup>.

The guide can be downloaded from <http://bit.ly/dentonsrenewables2017> and highlights key regulatory developments, giving snapshots of the prospects for renewable energy projects in 16 jurisdictions across Europe and Central Asia. Dentons produced this guide in co-operation with Recharge, the global source for renewable energy news and intelligence.

## Khojaly – a heartrending artistic inspiration – highlighted in Paris



Vugar Quliyev outlines the motivation behind his Fauvist-influenced phantasmagorical masterwork *Libération* (Photos: Stylin'Co)



(from left) H.E. Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France; Vugar Quliyev, First Prizewinner; Mehri Quliyeva-Moghada, Second Prizewinner; Maya Baghirova, Winner, Jury Prize; Jean-Pierre Allali, Journalist, Writer and Jury Member; Asmar Narimanbekova, Artist and Jury Member; André Reichardt, Senator of the Bas-Rhin region, and Chairman of the France–Caucasus Group; Marie-Laetitia Gourdin, Director, TEAS France

In commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre, TEAS France organised a visual art competition, open to anyone who felt inspired to participate, aimed at raising public awareness of this saddest episode in recent Azerbaijani history. It also called for the peaceful resolution of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, an end to the illegal occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven surrounding districts, and the safe return of the estimated one million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their lands. This competition was placed under the High Patronage of André Reichardt, Senator of the Bas-Rhin region, and Chairman of the France–Caucasus Group.

The Jury comprised the Paris-based Azerbaijani artist Asmar Narimanbekova and Jean-Pierre Allali, French journalist and writer, and on the other hand, for TEAS, by Sabina Rakcheyeva, Violinist and Cultural Advisor; Marie-Laetitia Gourdin, Director, TEAS France; and Eliza Pieter, Director, TEAS Strasbourg.

The awards reception took place on 16 March in Paris, in the unique salon *Les Signatures*, operated by the Press Club of France, before a gathering of over 60 participants, comprising diplomats, politicians, artists and journalists. Selected from over 40 entries, 16 artworks were presented on that occasion, including paintings, drawings, sculptures and photographs, all of which represent the suffering of the Azerbaijani people and their hopes for peace.

Marie-Laetitia Gourdin, Director, TEAS France, commented: “With this art competition, we hope to draw the attention of opinion-leaders and civil society to the Khojaly Massacre, and convince these actors of the importance of engagement in the efforts to accelerate peaceful resolution of this conflict, based on the respect of international law, so that both Armenia and Azerbaijan can live in peace, as neighbours, in the near future.”

H.E. Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France, thanked TEAS for its initiative, and outlined how impressed he was by the artistic quality of the paintings and pictures selected. He also reminded the audience of the imperative to reach peaceful conflict resolution, respecting the principles of international law and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. In that respect, the role of France is crucial, and it needs to take very concrete actions to accelerate the process, hopefully enabling Armenians and Azerbaijanis to peacefully coexist, as was previously the case.

Senator André Reichardt explained that he visited Azerbaijan a few days earlier, with a delegation of seven French Senators, who went to see the Azerbaijani lands freed last April, after the so-called ‘Four-Day War’, and was horrified to see the appalling state

of this territory, where all has been destroyed. On the other hand, he was impressed to note the ongoing desire of Azerbaijanis to return to these lands. He underlined the important role that members of the French parliament must play in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict, and recalled the proposal he made to the President of the French Senate, Mr Larcher, in the margins of the official visit to France of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, to host a meeting between MPs from Baku and Yerevan in the near future.

Jean-Pierre Allali, Jury Member, stated: “I am proud of being both a friend of Azerbaijan and a friend of Armenia. The armed conflict between these two countries is, for me, an ongoing tragedy. I believe that it is necessary to highlight the dramas, such as that in Khojaly, brought about by this conflict, which is why I accepted to sit on the jury for artworks devoted to Khojaly.”

Asmar Narimanbekova, Jury Member, commented: “I was very honoured to be involved in this competition as a jury member. The artists who submitted their works to the competition all knew how to express their emotional responses to these dramatic events in a talented manner. The tragedy of Khojaly will never be forgotten, as it is the pain of the Azerbaijani people.”

Both members of the jury in attendance announced the prizewinners. First prize was awarded to Vugar Quliyev for his painting *Libération*. Vugar was born in the occupied city of Jabrayil, and is living in the city of Lyon where he studies art and regularly participates in exhibitions. Whilst receiving his prize, he commented: “I had to flee my home due to the invasion of the city by the Armenian armed forces during the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. My painting is a direct reflection of this war, and this crime against peaceful citizens. It’s about evil chasing away innocent souls who try to escape in the cold winter night.”

Despite the passing of four UN Security Council resolutions against the invasion, Armenia continues to occupy Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions to this day. Currently nearly 20 per cent of Azerbaijani territory remains occupied, and approximately one million refugees and IDPs are spread across Azerbaijan. The evening was dedicated to the memory of the Khojaly victims and those Azerbaijanis who have only one wish – to return to their homes and lands.

### Khojaly Visual Art Competition – France, 2017

First prize – *Libération* by Vugar Quliyev  
 Second prize – *Khojaly* by Mehri Quliyeva-Moghadam  
 Third prize – *The loss of human face* by Andrey Tyrtshnikov  
 Jury Prize – *Houses full of sadness* by Maya Baghirova



## Mugham – ancient, new, exciting, dynamic

Musicologist Dr Sanubar Baghirova of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) is one of the leading experts on mugham, the passionate semi-improvised ancient national music of Azerbaijan. She was responsible for successfully submitting mugham; the art of the Azerbaijani ashigs;



(from left) Dr Rachel Harris, Reader in Ethnomusicology, COAS; Dr Sanubar Baghirova, Musicologist, ANAS; Dr Sabina Rakcheyeva, Violinist and Cultural Advisor, TEAS; and renowned UK-based tar player Rafiq Rustamov

and the art of making and playing the tar (Azerbaijani string instrument) to UNESCO for inclusion in their list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and is the author of the two-volume book *Azerbaijani Mugham; Azerbaijani Music and Musicians* and dozens of published works in Azerbaijani, Russian and English. Dr Baghirova was also a consultant on the two BBC Radio 3 *World Routes* programmes that explored Azerbaijani music, and has co-operated with numerous international record companies on the recording and distribution of Azerbaijani music.

Following her participation in a conference at Cambridge University, she came to the world-renowned School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) – part of the University of London – to deliver a talk entitled *Mugham in Azerbaijan: New Trends and Classical Traditions*, organised by the SOAS Music Department and Vostok Society, and sponsored by TEAS. This was attended by 70 persons, including Dr Lucy Duran, a SOAS lecturer and frequent BBC Radio 3 broadcaster, and Simon Broughton, Editor-in-Chief of the leading world music periodical *Songlines* and world music columnist for the *Evening Standard* newspaper.

Musically illustrated by the legendary UK-based tar player Rafiq Rustamov, Honoured Worker of the Cultural Industry of the Azerbaijan Republic – born in Armenian-occupied Aghdam in Nagorno-Karabakh – whose career was kickstarted by winning a Gold Medal in the 1969 Soviet Music Festival and was formerly the Director of the Khan Shushinsky Music School and the Qarabag Bulbulleri (Nightingales of Karabakh Ensemble), Dr Baghirova swiftly delineated the development of the ‘classical traditions’ of mugham. Investigating the evolution of the modes of this ancient music, particularly

during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which saw the conception of the Azerbaijani variant of the tar in Karabakh, she demonstrated how new developments by various mugham masters were rapidly assimilated into tradition. The performance by Mr Rustamov of an excerpt from *Bayati-Shiraz* and three variants on *Rast* mugham demonstrated the dexterity and passion of a master at work.

Dr Baghirova also played some recent recordings and performances by innovators – both Azerbaijani and foreign – who are taking a new approach to mugham tradition, combining classical and jazz with mugham to remarkable effect. She explained: “Mugham themes i.e. melodies of free metre, are not normally composed by the mugham performers, as they are a form of canonical musical text. However, this does not mean that the performer cannot contribute their own details to this text. They must strike the right balance between the canonical and personal components, and the balance where traditional elements are prevailing over personal and innovative ones.



Dr Baghirova gave a fascinating insight into the development of mugham and indicated the trajectories that it is currently following and the influences impacting its evolution

“The compositions for kamancha and piano by Elnur Mikayilov and the duets between French jazz singer Pierre de Trégomain and Azerbaijani khanande Gochag Askarov demonstrate different approaches to mugham. The composers do not deliberately strive to maintain the correct balance, as their compositions are not classical mugham with a specific sequence order of melodic phrases that serve to develop the mugham mode.

“The composition by Elnur Mikayilov does not show any traditional melodic progression, or use a traditional type of music ensemble. It is purely beautiful music composed mainly on the base of mugham vocabulary and its modal ‘grammar’.

“An alternative approach to mugham is displayed in the compositions of Pierre and Gochag. This music is a combination of mugham vocabulary and some melodic patterns taken in a free, not canonical order, with a western melodic vocabulary. Their

two compositions are *Let Me Be Voice* in the mugham mode *Bayati Kurd*, the other being *Shelter*, in the mode *Bayati Shiraz*. The two singers represent two musical realms and two semi-improvised musical languages – jazz and mugham – and they are juxtaposed. These two musical genres are not just placed mechanically side-by-side; they are related to each other by a certain modal, linguistic, and emotional affinity. The entire score happens to be polyphonic, comprising a few musical lines and even strata, but it does not show any eclectic touch. They sound homogeneous. And it sounds very spiritual, and this reflects the very spirit of the mugham.”

Video footage of the performances – recorded at the International Mugham Centre in Baku – stunned the audience into silence, with the mellifluous interplay between the tenor of Pierre and Gochag, seamlessly mixing styles, approaches and both English and Azerbaijani. Dr Baghirova commented: “This is very spiritual music and has a cathartic quality. This is the music of an inner world and does not destroy the origins of mugham.”

The speech ended with a lively and informed question-and-answer session, including questions about the origins of mugham, which Dr Baghirova considered to date back to the pre-Christian and pre-Islamic Zoroastrian period in Azerbaijan, and whether the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict was having any impact on development of the music, to which Dr Baghirova replied: “There is no Azerbaijani music in Karabakh”, and Sabina Rakcheyeva, Violinist and Cultural Advisor, TEAS expanded: “Unfortunately, currently mugham is a music in exile. All the great mugham singers and performers – including Rafiq and Gochag – are from Karabakh.”



Rafiq Rustamov, Honoured Worker of the Cultural Industry of the Azerbaijan Republic, performed a devastating and evocative series of variations on *Rast* mugham

Go to <http://bit.ly/gochagandpierre> to see Gochag Askarov and Pierre de Trégomain performing *Let Me Be Voice*.

Designer Leonie Mergen outlines the motivation behind her exciting new Karabakh-Collection at the London Fashion Week afterparty for her show

## Karabakh hits the catwalk

The 25-year-old Dorsten-born fashion designer Leonie Mergen is one of the emergent talents of the Berlin scene. A stickler for detail, she is a graduate from the Berlin International University of Art for Fashion (ESMOD) and has undertaken internships at some of the leading Berlin fashion houses, including EDSOR-Berlin, Hellmann Menswear and Dawid Tomaszewski.

Her second collection – the Karabakh-Collection – comprises a series of pieces inspired by the traditional attire of the Azerbaijani Karabakh region, which remains under Armenian occupation. In late January and early February, this hit the respective runways of Berlin and London with the support of the TEAS offices in Germany and London, appearing at the Mercedes-Benz Berlin Fashion Week; L'Oréal Professionnel showcase for 200 L'Oréal representatives, also in Berlin;



The Karabakh-Collection – seen here at the Mercedes-Benz Berlin Fashion Week – features entirely natural materials redolent of the Karabakh region – fur, leather, silk and wool, exhibiting exquisite detailing, undertaken in Germany

and London Fashion Week, which led to its inclusion on the Vogue UK website (<http://bit.ly/voguekarabakhcollection>). Neil Watson caught up with Leonie amidst the contemporary minimalist splendour of the Bulgari Hotel in Knightsbridge to learn more:

### How did you feel the launch at London Fashion Week was received?

I think it was fantastic. The location in Devonshire Square was beautiful and it was a whole new experience, as the Berlin event took place inside, whereas the London runway is outside, in a courtyard.

### What originally stimulated your interest in entering the fashion industry?

I started sketching concepts for fashion at a very young age, and by the age of around 10 I realised that my future lay in the fashion industry. When I started sketching, my objective was to tailor some clothes for myself and for my dolls! I used the sewing machine belonging to my grandmother to sew the clothes.

### What has been the critical response to the Karabakh-Collection, to date?

I have not received any reviews from the British fashion media, so far, but I am pleased to say that the German fashion media has been uniformly positive. They have understood the significance of taking inspiration from the Karabakh region, and have described the collection as very elegant and wearable.

### Do you design by hand-sketching, or do you use CAD systems?

I use both the time-honoured methods and the latest technologies. I initially sketch by hand, and then transpose these into technical drawings using CAD systems.

### Your first collection was entitled *Public Boudoir*. What was this, and how it was shown/distributed?

*Public Boudoir* focused on women's fashions from the 18<sup>th</sup> century up until today. During that period, the boudoir was the only room where the woman was exempted from the strict clothing rules that formed part of the social norms of the time. My collection, entitled *Public Boudoir*, represents the development of women's social freedom until now.

My collection synthesised the fashions of the past with contemporary approaches. I took historical clothing and combined it with modern designs, which bore some similarities in approach to what I have achieved with the Karabakh-Collection.

### Were you first introduced to Azerbaijani designs and fashions when undertaking your internship at EDSOR-Berlin five years ago?

Indeed – we were working on a project entitled the Karabakh-Azerbaijan range that took the patterns from Karabakh



Many of the male fashions are reminiscent of the rich history of equestrianism in the region





The Karabakh-Collection is unique, inspired and irrefutably wearable

carpets that were applied to scarves, ties and pochettes. They were all made of silk.

**What led you to become interested in creating the Karabakh-Collection?**

The Karabakh-Azerbaijan range only focused on these three accessories, and I felt this was a shortcoming, when compared to the cultural richness of the region. I perceived that there was scope to develop an entire collection of pieces that not only focused on ethnic patterns, but also on traditional clothing and national symbols, such as the pomegranate.

Altogether there are 26 looks, distilled from over 500 initial sketches, my intention being to make each look very individual and instilling an element of individuality to each piece. I wanted to avoid any looks from being too close to each other, yet there needed to be continuity throughout the line.



The bodice is feminine and inspired by the past, yet with an undeniably contemporary edge

**From what materials are the Karabakh-Collection made?**

They are solely made of natural materials, including wool, leather, silk and fur – the original materials from the region that were used in historical clothing. The entire Karabakh-Collection was made in Germany, although the distinctive boots were manufactured in Azerbaijan.

**For how long were you working on the collection?**

I worked on the collection for an extraordinary time period. I tried to design and manage every element myself. I undertook all the designing, patternmaking and oversaw the production. In total, I worked on the collection for over two years.

**From where did you get your information on Karabakh traditional garments?**

I visited Azerbaijan on numerous occasions on fact-finding missions and visited all the main museums – most notably the carpet museum – and was provided with archive access. I collected a great deal of research materials from books and by studying historical clothing.

**Both the Karabakh-Collection and Public Boudoir collection have taken inspiration from the past. What are the challenges when synthesising ancient and contemporary clothing?**

On this occasion, the challenge was to take the traditional Karabakh carpet patterns and to modernise them so they are wearable. The carpet patterns are very rich and strong and the designer does not want to change them, yet it is necessary to produce clothes that are wearable in an everyday context.

**Who do you see as the potential customers for the collection?**

I have received very positive feedback from Azerbaijan and there have been enquiries about buying some of the looks. I feel there is great scope for custom emanating from Azerbaijan. I am building an online shop at the present time, and I am speaking to various shops in Berlin about stocking the collection.

**Why was it particularly important that the Karabakh-Collection was exhibited in Berlin and London? Did you also want to raise awareness about the current status of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is currently under ongoing Armenian occupation?**

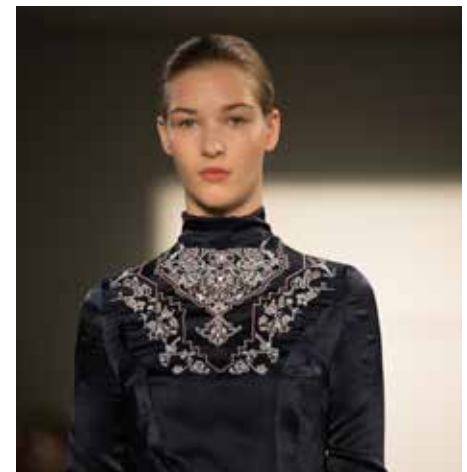
Yes, I think it is essential to stress that Karabakh and its cultural heritage is an integral part of Azerbaijan and to bring this message to as many cities as possible.

**Where do you see the Karabakh-Collection being exhibited in the future?**

I would be delighted to bring it to Azerbaijan for the Baku Fashion Week, in addition to other important European fashion weeks, such as those in Brussels and Milan.



This delightful combination is ideal for spring



Silks and carpet design influences are evident in this stunning creation



Leonie acknowledges the appreciation from fashionistas, bloggers and decision-makers at London Fashion Week

Go to [www.leoniemergen.com](http://www.leoniemergen.com) to see footage of the Berlin and London Karabakh-Collection runway events and to learn more about the creative powerhouse that is Leonie Mergen.



Neil Watson discusses the necessity of preserving orally-transmitted Azerbaijani folklore with Professor Mukhtar Kazimoglu, Director, Institute of Folklore under ANAS, alongside Dr Aynur Qezenferqizi, Superior Scientific Worker, Institute of Folklore under ANAS

## Mukhtar Kazimoglu – folklore is the mirror of history

Professor Mukhtar Kazimoglu has been the Director of the Institute of Folklore under the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) since 2011. He is a graduate of the Philological Faculty of Baku State University, and the ANAS Nizami Institute of Literature, where he worked from 1983–1992 in the mythology department. He was also editor-in-chief of the Yazichi Publishing House from 1992–2000. From 2001–2003 he worked at the Scientific-Cultural Centre Folklore Palace in the Folklore of Turkic Nations department. Professor Kazimoglu is the author of numerous publications, particularly focusing on laughter, satire and characterisations in Azerbaijani folklore.

**You originally focused on modern Azerbaijani literature and language. What stimulated your interest in Azerbaijani folklore?**

Naturally, my initial scientific investigations focused on modern Azerbaijan prose, particularly from a psychological perspective. It is evident that psychology is the root of the artistic reflection principle. Its main condition is to reflect life events through the subjective consciousness of the hero, and to give prominence to the ‘thinking’ hero through the subsequent prose. The most frequent hero for the tales and sagas based on the psychological principle, known as ‘psychological prose’, is the hero who has achieved self-knowledge.

Such heroes achieve a subconscious double-face, and their voice comes face-to-face with the strange voice, where one of the voices refutes, whereas the other affirms. The root of such a subconscious double-face is characteristic of the psychological prose found in mythological literature. In the mythological perception of the world, the hero is parallel with the anti-hero; the true hero is parallel with the false hero; each complementing the other. In international folklore, the false king becomes the magic power source of the real king; the false hero becomes the magic power source for the real hero; and

the false betrothed becomes the magic power source for the real fiancé.

The death of the false hero plays an important role in the rebirth of the real hero and in gaining the necessary invincible powerforce. In the mythological system of thought and related folklore, real and false hero types are both opposing, yet together. They reject, yet need, each other, and this is evident in the written literature, where the heroes combine the positive and negative; the good and bad; the good and evil; and the dramatic effect takes its inspiration from the real and false hero system in mythology and folklore.

Investigation into such psychological topics gradually brought me to mythology and folklore, and my scientific investigations were undertaken in two directions – typology of folklore and written literature, and investigations into those elements of folklore that are less frequently researched.

**You began work in the Mythology Department of the Institute of Literature in 1983, when Azerbaijan was still part of the Soviet Union. To what extent was specifically Azerbaijani Folklore permitted to coexist alongside the prevailing Soviet culture?**

It is undeniably true that, during the Soviet period, much investigative work was undertaken into Azerbaijani folklore. Many textbooks and monographs were prepared, particularly in the genre of Azerbaijani oral folk literature; and many folkloric examples from different genres were collected, including special volumes comprising proverbs and sayings, riddles, quatrains, and jokes. The publication of Azerbaijani legends and tales in five volumes, based on academic principles, ranked amongst the foremost achievements of the Soviet period of Azerbaijan folkloric studies.

However, there were numerous gaps during the Soviet period of Azerbaijani folkloric study emanating from the political regime and ideology of the time.

The work of collecting was insufficiently comprehensive, and failed to reflect the richness of Azerbaijani oral folk literature. Those compiled and published folkloric examples were adapted according to Soviet ideology, particularly applying the concept of the class struggle and ideological analyses.

It was a failing that Soviet-era studies of Azerbaijani folklore studied oral folk literature in isolation, not taking into account music, dance, carpet-making, folk medicine, folk architecture and other branches of folklore, including ethnography. Unfortunately, this approach continues to persist.

**What led you to join the Folklore Palace Scientific-Cultural Centre, which latterly became the Azerbaijani Institute of Folklore?**

The establishment of the separate Folklore Institute on the basis of the Folklore Palace Scientific-Cultural Centre is indicative of the attention and care paid to folk culture since the regaining of Azerbaijani independence. Whilst working at the Institute of Folklore with my colleagues, our main objective has been to undertake the collection, publication and investigation into Azerbaijani folklore to a world standard level, thereby introducing Azerbaijani folklore to many Azerbaijanis and to the wider world.

**What is the focus of your own research and publications?**

The main objective of my own investigations is to identify and clarify the uniquely Azerbaijani identity of folklore and folk culture, based on oral principles, being verbally transmitted between generations.

**Where has your work been published, and have any been translated into foreign languages?**

Many of my scientific investigations have been published in Azerbaijani, some of which have also been published in Turkish, Russian, Ukrainian and English.



**Your doctoral thesis and other publications have focused on the folk culture of laughter in Azerbaijan. Why is humour and laughter so important to Azerbaijanis?**

The theme of my doctoral thesis is folkloric laughter, and this is inherently different to the satire found in written literature. Insurmountable barriers may exist between critics and those being criticised in satirical works, but it is difficult to find such barriers in folk laughter. The critics and the objects of their criticism are usually close and work together, as those who laugh and are the source of the humour. They are participants in the same game of mockery and fun. As in other nations, Azerbaijanis look at such laughter as the symbol of rebirth, power and force.

**What are the current aims and objectives of the Azerbaijani Institute of Folklore?**

It is difficult to delineate all the aims and duties of the Institute of Folklore in a short interview. We are extremely busy with collecting, compiling and investigating archaic folklore, classical folklore, modern folkloric directions and preparing the multi-volume *Basis of Azerbaijani Folklore*; we aim to publish such folklore anthologies drawn from all regions of Azerbaijan, including South Azerbaijan and other regions outside the country that are home to Azerbaijanis, such as Kirkuk, Darband, and Borchali; and to create an Azerbaijani folkloric map.

**How does the Institute work with other government organisations?**

As the Institute of Folklore operates under the auspices of ANAS, it liaises constantly with academic organisations, such as the institutes of literature, linguistics, archaeology and ethnography, history, and information and communications technologies. It is constantly aiming to undertake detailed investigations into folklore in collaboration with such organisations. It is not accidental that I mentioned the Institute of Information and Communications Technologies. It is undeniable that the internet now plays an essential role in promoting understanding of and investigation into folklore. Collaboration with the Institute helps us to organise our work accordingly – we are now publishing ‘digital folklore’.

**What is published in the *Dada Gorgud* periodical?**

The *Dada Gorgud* periodical that we publish is a scientific and literary journal. It contains various articles on aspects of Azerbaijan folklore and folkloric examples from other Turkic nations.

**Which musical CDs has the Institute released?**

The separate Folklore Studio is attached to the Institute of Folklore, and has been responsible for issuing a series of albums of Azerbaijani folk music. Titles include *The Music Folklore of Karabakh, Halays, Ashiq Music, Azerbaijani Folksongs, and The Repertoire of the Irs (Heritage) Ensemble*. Such resources play an integral role in the Folklore Fund at our Institute.

**One of the most important works published by the Institute is the nine-volume *Karabakh – Folklore is also a History*. What does this contain and how was this material collected?**

*Karabakh – Folklore is also a History* includes folkloric examples collected from the Azerbaijanis formerly living in Karabakh who are now resident in nearby regions, or in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

**How does this serve to support the fact that Karabakh is irrefutably Azerbaijani territory?**

It is an undeniable truism that many oral folk literature examples originated in Karabakh in the local dialect of the Azerbaijani language spoken by Azerbaijani Turks. These stories are preserved in our memories, and their oral transmission is a fact of culture and history. Naturally, Karabakh folklore is a mirror of Karabakh history. Karabakh is Azerbaijani native land:

*Eziziyem Garabag,  
Shaki, Shirvan, Garabag.  
Tehran jennete donse,  
Yaddan chikhmaz Garabag.*

(Translation: My best places are Karabakh, Sheki, and Shirvan; if Tehran becomes a paradise; no-one can forget Karabakh.)

**You recently led a delegation during the multiculturalism conference in Mulhouse. What is the value of attending such conferences?**

The objective of this conference, organised at the Upper Alsace University in Mulhouse, served to enhance understanding of the inherent multiculturalism of Azerbaijan. This university already collaborates with myriad Azerbaijani state institutions. This has resulted in the establishment of the Nizami Ganjavi Literature and Culture Department; the Mahsati Ganjavi Hall; and the teaching of Azerbaijani Language and Literature to students of the philology faculty at the University. There are also excellent relations between the Upper Alsace University and our Institute.



Neil Watson receives the invaluable compendium of Azerbaijani CDs comprising *The Music Folklore of Karabakh*

Composer Pierre Thilloy has been instrumental in forging this collaboration. He is very loyal to the Azerbaijani cause, having been Composer-in-Residence for the French Embassy in Azerbaijan for several years. To date, he has composed the tone poem *Khojaly 613*, dedicated to the victims of the Khojaly Massacre; his tenth symphony *Exil*, representing the plight of Azerbaijani IDPs and refugees; and another work representing the massacre of Azerbaijanis by Bolsheviks and Armenians on 31 March 1918.

After repeated visits to the Institute of Folklore, Pierre composed a symphonic poem based on the saga *The Book of Dada Gorgud* as a commission from the leadership of the Institute.

**Are there any plans to publish the work of the Institute of Folklore into foreign languages?**

There is a great necessity to translate the valuable scientific works and folklore volumes published by the Institute of Folklore into English and the other foreign languages. However, the practicalities – particularly financial – need to be in place.

**Upon which projects are the Institute of Folklore currently working?**

The institute has have just completed the project entitled *The Genesis of State Symbols, Etiquettes, Ceremonies and Holidays in Turkic Nations according to Folklore*. Subsequently, we have published two monographs entitled *Folklore and Statehood Thinking*. In 2017, one of the main projects will be Azerbaijani Studies and Multiculturalism in Folklore. The predominant objective of this will be to investigate uniquely indigenous forms of Azerbaijani folklore.

Visit [www.folklor.az](http://www.folklor.az) for more information on the Institute of Folklore under ANAS.

### Leyla – musings on poetry, prose, love and translation

Leyla Jafarova (Begim) is a graduate from the Azerbaijani State Oil Academy, and lives in the Czech Republic. She is also a member of the Union of Azerbaijani Writers, the Russian-speaking Writers' Union of the Czech Republic, and the European Writers' Congress. To date, she has published four books of poetry, some of which have been translated into Czech by Milan Dvorak, and into English by Ali Talibov and Gulnara Hall. Neil Watson spoke to Leyla at home in Prague to learn more:

#### When did you begin writing poetry?

I was mature enough – I was aged 27 or 28 – and, in my view, all the rhymes and verses that came to my mind before that age did not count as poetry. It seems to me that the desire for confession appears in adulthood. I believe that poetry is a confessional art form.

#### Which poets particularly inspired you?

I am usually inspired by the poetry of life. However, some poets sometimes affect me, particularly if I like the rhythm or melody of the poetry. For example, I am an aficionado of sonnets and sometimes, and when I read Rainer Maria Rilke or Francesco Petrarca, I feel a wave of inspiration and want to express my thoughts and feelings in sonnet form. I never undertook creative writing courses, so all my poems come straight from my heart and are not overimpacted by style.

#### Where have your poems been published?

My poems have been published in various literary newspapers, magazines and poetry books in Baku, Russia and the Czech Republic, where I live. In the latter, my sonnets have been published in the translations by Milan Dvorak, the famous Czech translator and poet. I am also the author of four poetry books published in the Czech Republic and Russia.

#### How would you describe your poetic style?

I think the roots of my poetry have been fed by Eastern mysticism and Russian and European classic poetry. However, the fruits have a new taste that is very much my own. I write in Russian because I was educated in that language, and that it is my poetic language. Often I think about people who mean something to me, so *To Isadora Duncan* came to me after I read a biography of this famous dancer, and I wrote a poetic eulogy to Rashid Behbudov because he has an absolutely unique voice, and both he and Muslim Magomayev are my favourite Azerbaijan singers.



Leyla Begim writes poetry that is direct from the heart

#### How did you come to live in Prague?

All creative persons need freedom, including that of movement. They have to travel, see the world, and to live in different environments to feel how diverse and inclusive they are. Europe is central to the world of art, and is home to all the best museums. I consider Prague to be one of the most beautiful historical European cities with an absolutely inspiring environment. My move to Europe was just one step towards expanding the boundaries of my inner world infinity in time and space.

#### How did you come to collaborate with Efraim Abramov and why did you decide to collaborate on theatrical plays?

I was about to start writing a play when, serendipitously, I simultaneously received a letter from Efraim Abramov who read my poetry on Facebook and sensed the grains of a play. He suggested that prose should be combined with poetry, and I agreed to do so. We subsequently amalgamated our ideas, and created five plays together, one of which was dedicated to the heroes of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

This play eventually received its premiere in the Azerbaijani State Youth Theatre at the end of March 2016 under the direction of Vagif Asadov. In all our plays, one of the heroes is a poet, and naturally they have some elements of my character, although these protagonists are not really based on myself.

The poems are relevant to the dramatic passages and dialogue, as sometimes they play a narrative role in the plot and, at other times, are part of the dialogue. The spoken poetic recitals also, to a certain extent, operate as a Shklovskian defamiliarisation device, whereby the artfulness of an object is appreciated by increasing the length of perception.

**The play *Two Little Leaves of Mint for Love* features very strong female characters that are in control of their own destiny, sexuality and have a**

**strong sense of female camaraderie, whereas the men are weak, conniving, misogynist, drunkards and even described as Neanderthals. One of the poems even ends with the phrase 'I'll tell you openly with no fibs: we are not made from your ribs'. Do you believe that this is an accurate portrayal of women in Azerbaijani society?**

I was not aiming to specifically represent Azerbaijani or European women, but instead wanted to portray modern women in European society. For example, the character of Nata has a relationship conducted solely by Skype, which has now become completely acceptable.

**One of the most powerful characters is that of Eva, who has suffered the death of a child. How has she been affected?**

Eva is not a purely fictional characterisation, as so many mothers have lost their children, and I recalled their behaviour when in a grief-stricken state. We did not solely aim to convey the pain of our heroine to the audience, but wanted to show how important it is to empathise, understand and help each other.

**What does the conclusion of the play, when Sabina shoots her husband (albeit with blanks) mean?**

Actually, I would like to hear thoughts on the conclusion from the readers and audience members. However, I wish to state that killing does not eradicate evil and, at the end of our play, our heroes destroy all the scenery that they were about to paint and renovate. It is impossible to build a solid house based on rotten foundations...

**What are your thoughts about poetry in English translation?**

Poetry is the most difficult literary genre to translate. There are two types of poetry translation. One directly renders the thoughts of the author, whereby the meaning of the poem is maintained, but quite often the special qualities of a poem, such as its sound, rhythm, assonance, metre etc. can be lost. The second translation type is where the translator



aims to retain all those qualities. This can sometimes result in the translator's own interpretation of the poem, rather than a direct translation, although the essence is not lost.

To me, successful translation is when both form and content are accurately replicated. However, the most effective form is when an impression is achieved that is similar to that produced by the author in their original text. Numerous translators adopting both translation types, including Eugeny Dubnov, Gulnara Hall and Ali Farman, have translated my work. I am of the view that translation of poetry is an art, and the task of the translator is to make an art from art, yet retaining the aesthetic of the original. Knowing how challenging the process of translation is, I am extremely fortunate that the translators with which I have worked are very creative and knowledgeable. I am most grateful that they preserve my emotions, style and the messages I aim to convey to my readers.



Leyla's passion for life and honesty is refreshing



Leyla is inspired by truth, life and love

**To Isadora Duncan  
(translator: Ali Talibov)**

A beam of sun that lights the path of sorrow,  
Tries to warm the cold of Père-Lachaise,  
Leaves that are spun around by wind of autumn,  
Dance in the golden twist of 'cache-nez'.

Adding hush to everlasting silence,  
I am moving slowly down the beam.  
Solo-play by the autumn of 'Les Valses',  
A picture that is coming from my dream.

Like a flame was quivering in dances,  
In a golden dress with her shoes off,  
Isadora – perfection of 'gracias',  
Flies up by Yesenin's style strophe.

Sway and fly – a move inspired by Nietzsche,  
Yet in eyes a swing of playful wave,  
Like a bird that's free she was, was not she?  
Wings in days of hardship, trying to save.

I approach the gravestones full of mourning,  
One that's black with flowers touched by the wind,  
Skies are fresh of blood in the early morning,  
Sacred moment coming from my dream...

**To Rashid Behbudov  
(translator: Ali Talibov)**

Over the Caspian dune  
Stars shine in the air  
And I enjoy the tune  
Which is always there  
The wave is made so fair  
Who dances and  
Falls in with love and care  
With steps of yours  
On sand.

Today, the town of mine  
Sings you aloud  
And moves ahead with time  
The sounds are proud  
And gardens where you walk  
Become coloured once again  
And flowers do not talk  
Just loving you  
In vain.

The glory you have brought  
To Azerbaijan  
You put a beauty spot  
Straight to the Sun...

**One year without you... (from Seasons  
of Love) (translator: Gulnara Hall)**

New life will bring the vibrant chances...  
I will unlock the feelings that were sealed.  
The secrets of my soul will be revealed  
That had me searching for the answers.

The feelings, spreading their wings  
Like birds are flying in my heart.  
Neglectful to the seasons' change  
So pure they are, with no sins...

But summer sails away without warning...  
I'll be awakened by the rainy morning...  
Then winter anguish, sore and grief...

The chiming clock will strike midnight.  
The sores will be diluted in champagne.  
In the upcoming joy I will believe...

In the forthcoming joy I will believe.  
At the boom of fireworks and ringing bells  
I will revive my dreams and hopes.  
My restless soul will be relieved.

The candle's fragile flames will cast  
A light upon my secret painting.  
I'll ask providence: where are you?  
My destiny to you I will entrust.

My heart will be dictating rhymes  
Describing seasons of my love...  
You'll hear their gentle stream...

The ending sonnet in my notebook  
Will have the glowing verse, despite  
The inky night of January becoming dim...

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