

THESIS: Although Armenians were nearly wiped out in through wars and genocide, in this paper I will show Armenians survived and preserved their culture through the aid of the duduk.

“Jivan Gasparyan Jr took part in the celebration of his grandfather's 80th birthday anniversary in Yerevan and performed with guest musicians such as Zucchero, Andreas Vollenweider, Boris Grebenshikov, Alan Parsons Project, Planet X. Big Apple Music Awards cultural foundation recognized Jivan Gasparyan, Jr. as the best duduk player in New York and the prize was for continuing the art and tradition of Jivan Gasparyan SR and the Armenian tradition” (Jivan Gasparyan Jr. Website).

"The Centrality of National Identity to Perceptions of the Duduk," focuses on the duduk's history beginning with the 1920s, since-with the exception of some archeological evidence-there is a lack of earlier performance data and actual instruments. This invites the question of whether the current practice is based on an older tradition or if it is an invention influenced chiefly by centuries of Russian rule and cultural influence and manipulation.” (Moore 2006)

The duduk was one of the first instruments to grab attention once Armenians started using a notation system. The culture’s music finally developed and was preserved by adding more national instruments. As the music advanced, so did recordings of them. Broadcasts and recordings were using music that was now arranged and not just played by memory. The duduk used what musicians know as a diatonic scale. The studying of the duduk in schools and

conservatories helped Armenia develop from frightened cultivated people to an urban culture.

Among this developing was the use of the duduk in films and recordings by a curious Armenian man who is now a legend, Djivan Gasparian. (Moore 2006)

Maestro Djivan Gasparian worked with the Kronos Quartet on a popular CD titled *Night Prayers*. Djivan also has a history of a collaboration with songwriters and composers. Lionel Ritchie, Peter Gabriel and Michael Brook are among a few. Accomplishments like these are ones that make the Armenian culture proud. Since we as an Armenian community are small, with a population of about 2 million people in Armenia, we are extremely proud when another Armenian comes along and brings success to our name. Djivan also has a reputation of working on film scores including *The Crow*, *The Russian House* and *Gladiator*. Most of his work incorporates the *duduk* in genres that Armenians have never associated with this instrument. Duduk is mostly used for funerals, and emotional events, but Djivan was able to take the instrument and transform it to be used in jazz pieces as well (Pahlevanian 2001).

Djivans accomplishments keep amazing Armenians across the world and bringing pride to our culture. His son has worked with modern popular composer Sebu Simonian on two projects that are titled “Hummingbird” and “Have you Ever Heard Somebody.” He performed alongside his father for the opening section of a concert for “Nelson Mandela’s 90th Birthday celebration,” which took place in London. This was a big deal because Djivan and his son were exposed in front of celebrities such as Amy Winehouse, Quincy Jones and Will Smith (Jivan Gasparyan Jr. Website).

“Armenian duduk player Djivan Gasparyan began to teach himself to play the *duduk* (cylindrical double-reed instrument) at the age of eight. He performed as a soloist with the State Ensemble of Song and Dance of Armenia under the direction of T’at’ul Altunyan. In 1957 he won prizes in the International Performers’ Competition at the 6th World Festival of Youth and Students and the All-Union Competition for Performers of Folk Instruments held in Moscow; he began touring in the same year, subsequently performing in festivals and concerts throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and North and South America, including the Third Asian Music Rotrum of the International Music Council in 1973, organized by UNESCO where he won first prize among the best musicians of Asia and Africa. His virtuoso technique earned him the nickname ‘The Magician of the *duduk*’. He also played the *zuina*, the *shvi*, the *blul* and the clarinet” (Pahlevanian 2001).

The Armenian people have been through numerous wars and have constantly faced being overthrown by foreign countries. In Armenia, politics, economics and spirituality are all connected through music, especially folk music. From the 5th to the 7th century, Armenia was juggling for liberation and this lead to revolutionary movements, starting the creation of the Armenian Alphabet. New forms of folk music came about and melodic structures were widened. (Kerovpyan, Sarkisyan 2001)

Q: Hello Norik, my name is Arman and I would like to ask you a few questions today regarding your instrument and its connections to our history. What is the first thing you think of when you have a duduk in your hand? Is it associated with our homeland?

The better question would be what is it not associated with (chuckles). When I think of my instrument, I remember how old our history is and back to our first ancestors. Armenia is our land and our dirt, which makes it that much more special to me to be an Armenian and to play an instrument of my own ethnicity. I feel so proud when I hold a duduk in my hand and this traces back to my father, who was a musician himself. He trained as a musician at a time when technology was not that complex: a time when all he could focus on were the instrument and notes. I keep thinking today what his opinions would be about the technology of keyboards and how well duduk sounds are used in films. Although he didn't tour, he had a good career in Armenia. Unfortunately, he passed away too soon.

Q: How has playing this instrument made a difference in you or your family's life?

From my family, my wife is very proud of my accomplishments. My kids and grandkids have been affected hugely by the music in America and unfortunately do not understand the duduk as well as I would like them to. Its not even getting them to like it because I try to tell them our history and what has happened to Armenians. The problem may also be that they are not old enough yet to comprehend what has happened and that is a huge part of the experience of this instrument. However, I try to preserve our culture by at least enforcing the language. Whenever I am at my daughters house, our whole family only speaks Armenian. I find that our duty as Armenians is to do our best to speak the language because I find that our young generation has difficulty in using Armenian words. They are typically thinking in English first and then translate it, which does not make sense sometimes. Nonetheless, I am happy and proud to be Armenian and that is the reason why my agent supports me so much. Yuval Ron is his name and although he is not Armenian, he understands our culture and loves our music.

Q: I know that the duduk is your main instrument, but I was curious to ask if you play any other Armenian instruments? I find that since the duduk is a serious and emotional instrument, most musicians would not associate themselves with other classes of Armenian instruments because they do not view them seriously.

It's interesting that you view it that way because I have musician friends that share that mindset. However, I actually love all Armenian instruments. I even play shvi, dhol, and clarinet, which as you know are known as the happier instruments of our ethnicity. I also use the duduk to play happy tunes by using major scales, but not for everyone: only people that appreciate and accept my instrument for what it is. People find it unusual since the duduk is associated with funerals, but I like to utilize the instrument in many ways and not limit the playability to just minor music.

Q: Do you usually perform for Armenians or other races as well? Do you find that people commonly know about your instrument and our culture?

Yes. I love that when I perform, people either know that I am Armenian or they ask and want to know more. I have had Jewish and American students who loved to play armenian tunes both on the duduk and clarinet. I even find that other races appreciate our instruments more than most young Armenians. Most of my students are over the age of 50 and of course they are not able to play without asking about what has happened and what is currently happening to our country. I am extremely proud of the current political system in Armenia. I am sure as you know, our president used to be very corrupt and sat in office for more than the time that was allowed. Thankfully after much protesting, the voice of the people was heard and they elected a man much more eligible and fit for the position of prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan.

Q: When I think of the duduk, I am reminded of the genocide, which is the most tragic event that has occurred to Armenians. Does playing the instrument remind you of our history and strike a specific emotion we can discuss?

I am disturbed by our history and if you know the same history is happening now with the Turks to the Kurds. It is something that is inevitable and we cannot let our history destroy us. The duduk definitely is so emotional and the melodies that are played are filled with love and survival. What has happened in the past cannot be erased. The Turkish people tried to wipe our community but we survived and made something of our culture, whether that be musically, through dance or education. The cello is not our instrument. The trumpet is not our instrument. However the DUDUK, the dudk is ours. It is the instrument that is able to bring us joy and tears. If anything, the genocide made us stronger as Armenians. We had a reason to become better people and to spread love. I believe my job as a musician is to do this and remind others that we will not be perishing anytime soon.

Sources

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