

Samvel Khalatyan

100 YEARS LATER
One-Act Play

Yerevan- 2021



Author of the play: Samvel Khalatyan, Director: Gerald Papazian, Actors of the Nairyan Vocal Ensemble, Artistic Director: Naira Mughdusyan, Illustrations: Mughdusyan Center for the Arts, Karine Aroyan, Book design: Ani Hovhannisyan, Printing house: OPTIMA Print,

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100 YEARS LATER play and staging were developed within the framework of “The Prominent Armenian Women for Women Empowerment” campaign conducted by OxYGen Foundation for Protection of Youth and Women Rights.

OxYGen Foundation in partnership with Nairyan Vocal Ensemble of the Mughdusian Art Center within the framework of the “Addressing Gender-Biased Sex Selection and Related Harmful Practices in the South Caucasus: Support for Regional, National and South–South Interventions” programme, initiated a theatrical performance showcasing 5 prominent Armenian public figures of the 20th century and their role in women empowerment and fighting discrimination.

Actresses present MPs from the Parliament of the First Republic of Armenia: Varvara-Varya Sahakyan, Katarine Zalyan-Manukyan, Perchuhi Partizpanyan-Barseghyan and famous public figures Zabel Yesayan and Shushanik Kurginyan.

“The Prominent Armenian Women for Women Empowerment” campaign aims to foster gender-transformative approaches to eliminate discriminatory social norms and harmful practices in communities of Armenia and address the Gender-Biased Sex Selection (GBSS) in Armenia.

“Addressing Gender-Biased Sex Selection and Related Harmful Practices in the South Caucasus: Support for Regional, National and South–South Interventions” programme is implemented by UNFPA in partnership with OxYGen Foundation. The programme is co-funded by the European Union.





KATARINE ZALYAN-MANUKYAN

(died in 1965)

In 1919, when in many countries of the world women were still fighting for the right to vote, there were 3 female members in the Parliament of the First Armenian Republic. One of them was an Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) member Katarine Zalyan-Manukyan.

Zalyan-Manukyan was a physician devoted to helping orphans and refugees and to fighting epidemics. She met her future husband and one of the founders of the First Armenian Republic, Aram Manukyan at one of the orphanages. They got married in Yerevan in 1917. However, their married life did not last long as on January 29, 1919, Aram died of typhus fever

when their daughter Seda was only four months old.

On June 4 of 1919, Katarine Zalyan-Manukyan was elected as a member of the second convocation of the Parliament of Armenia and was a member of the Parliamentary Commission on Health. Following the fall of the First Republic, the young widow was subjected to political persecution by Soviet authorities. After she was fired from her job and evicted from her apartment, Katarine was forced to live with her sister in her one-room apartment. She then left to join her husband's relatives in Krasnodar, Russia.

In 1927, when Armenia had a desperate need for doctors, she returned to Yerevan and devoted her life to medicine while having to endure extremely harsh living conditions. Katarine Zalyan-Manukyan passed away in 1965.

"My mother was an educated and honest person devoted to her profession. She would leave for work in the morning, come home at noon, feed me, then lock me inside again and leave to work at a different job. That was the whole meaning of her life ..." From the memoirs of Seda Manukyan.



SHUSHANIK KURGHINIAN (POPOLJANTS)

(1876-1927)

Shushanik Kurghinian was born on August 18, 1876 in Alexandropol (now Gyumri), has studied in Arghutyan school for girls in the same town. In 1839 she became a member of Hnchakyan party, established the first Hnchak girls' group.

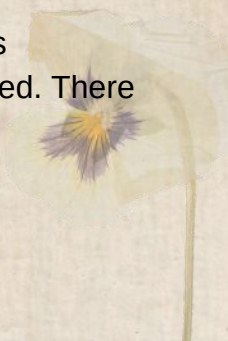
Kurghinian has been engaged in an active social work among Armenians in Caucasus. In 1895 she entered the Russian Gymnasium in Alexandropol (current Gyumri, Armenia). But circumstances changed and for not offending her parents, who greatly valued family traditions, at 24 she

married Arshak Kurghinian, a local tradesman. In 1903 she left for Moscow with her husband and two children – Shavarsh and Arshakanush, and then – to Rostov. Experiencing utmost hardships and destitution, Shushanik, had nothing but to immerse herself in writing.

In 1907 Kurghinian published her first poetry collection called “Sunrise Chimes”, some poems, which were a new, unique voice in the national poetry of 20th century, with high ideology, spirit of raise against ignorance and violence.

One direction of Shushanik Kurghinian's writings was dedicated to the protection of womens' rights in Armenian life (“Let us unite as well”, “Eagle's love”, “Do not love me”, “Indeed?”, “The Seamstress”, “The refugee woman” and others). Kurghinian wrote theatrical pieces as well, but they were not staged.

In 1921 Shushanik Kurghinian moved to Soviet Armenia. She has died in Yerevan and is interred in the Komitas Pantheon. A street was named after Kurghinayn, as well as a school, a library in Gyumri, where her bust is placed. There is a street and an alley named after her in Yerevan too.



I want to live, but not a lavish life wedged
in obscurity, unconcern, simple-mindedness,
nor an outright hostage of beauty aids
as a frail creature, delicate and feeble -
but equal to you, oh men,
auspicious, as you are - powerful and headstrong,
fit against calamities, and ingenious
with bodies full of fervor.

Come let, my sister, raise our voice to the world,
Let us stir our friends for the struggle,
In this dark, unworthy and wretched life,
A strait path, a way let us found.

Come, dear sister, let us unite,
Be part of that great and holiest fight,
Enough being chained, enough being captives,
In misty thoughts, perplexed from want.

Shushanik Kurghinyan



VARVARA (VARYA) SAHAKYAN

1903-1973

Varvara Sahakyan was an elected member of the Parliament of the First Republic and was involved in educational programs. During that period, she suffered a heavy loss. She lost her child due to the lack of medicine. This was followed by the takeover of Armenia by the Bolsheviks and her husband's imprisonment. During the February Uprising of 1918, Varvara Sahakyan's husband, Avetik Sahakyan (Father Abraham) and two children fled to Tabriz on foot.

After six years of life in Tabriz, the Sahakyans move to the south of Iran and then to Iraq. However, the climate affected Varya's health poorly and then the family was forced to move to Lebanon.

In Beirut, Varya became active in community service again helping the works of the Relief Cross. In 1932, she suffered another major blow by losing another one of her children and the year after that her husband passed away. These led to the final deterioration of Varya's health and she died soon after.





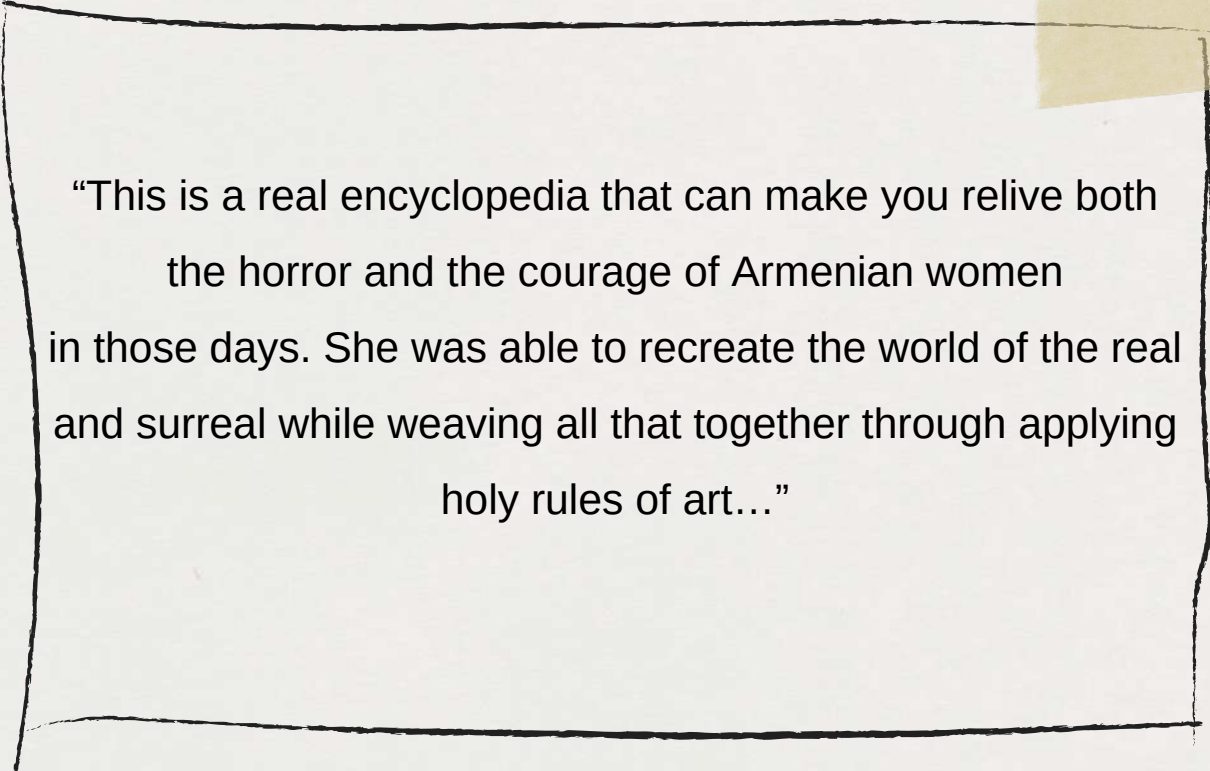
PERCHUHI PARTIZPANYAN-BARSEGHYAN
(1886-1940)

Perchuhi Partizpanyan was born in 1886 in Edirne, Turkey. She finished secondary school in Filibe (current Plovdiv, Bulgaria). At the age of 16, Perchuhi met her future husband, revolutionary Sargis Barseghyan who suggested she started a Girls' Club to promote education and revolutionary ideas. Then she left for Geneva to study literature and pedagogy. Perchuhi used to write also under the pseudonym Etna. Her novels are included in the collection of novels titled "After the storm."

Upon finishing her education Perchuhi taught in Gerasun and Van. In 1909 she married Sargis Barseghyan who was the head of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Bureau in Istanbul. In 1915, Sargis was arrested and murdered along with hundreds of other Armenian intellectuals. Perchuhi devoted the rest of her life to her child and service to people. She moved to Bulgaria and then to Tbilisi. When Armenia declared independence, Perchuhi returned to Yerevan and was elected as a member of the Parliament of the First Republic of Armenia. She was also involved in the American Fostering Committee.

After the fall of the First Republic, Perchuhi left for Bulgaria and then France where she headed the Fridtjof Nansen office for refugees and continued to write. Perchuhi Partizpanyan passed away in 1940 succumbing to a long illness. Her book titled "Parched Days" published in the Hayrenik magazine in Boston in 1938-39 has been particularly held in high regard by literary critics. In it she described the life in Istanbul and her memoirs of the Armenian Genocide. The book was published again in French in 2004 with her son's translation and support of her grandchildren. On the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide the book was made available for Armenian readers by writer Hakob Palyan.





“This is a real encyclopedia that can make you relive both
the horror and the courage of Armenian women
in those days. She was able to recreate the world of the real
and surreal while weaving all that together through applying
holy rules of art...”

Excerpt from the speech of writer Ghukas Sirunyan about Perchuhi
Partizpanyan from the presentation of the book "Burnt Days"



ZABEL YESAYAN

1878-1943

Zabel Yesayan was a witness to the most important events in the modern Armenian history by surviving the massacres in Cilicia (former Armenian Kingdom in the South of Turkey), the Armenian Genocide of 1915, the birth of the First Armenian Republic, the formation of the Armenian Diaspora ...

Zabel was born in Istanbul, Turkey. She studied in the Saint Cross school. Since 1895 she lived in Paris and studied philosophy and literature in Sorbonne university. She moved to Armenia in 1933 and fell victim to Stalin's regime. She was arrested in 1937 and according to some sources, she passed away in 1943 in a Baku prison...

Following the Armenian massacres in Cilicia in 1909, Zabel went to the scenes of the massacres as part of the group of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople where she witnessed the tragedies of her fellow Armenians and later depicted them in her book "In ruins" (Constantinople, 1991). During the years of the Armenian Genocide, Zabel Yesayan was organizing the transportation and care of Armenian refugees and orphans. During this period, she wrote her novels The Last Glass (Paris, 1916), My Soul in Exile (Vienna 1922), in which she voiced her discontent in regard to the great Armenian tragedy. Zabel published numerous articles, novels and reviews in French and other languages in newspapers of France and other countries dedicated solely to the Armenian Genocide. For a long time, she was a member of the Armenian Relief Committee in Paris and also used to write for the Yerevan newspaper in Paris. At the invitation of the Soviet government, Zabel Yesayan came to Yerevan in 1933 and started working at the Department of Foreign Literature of the Yerevan State University and taught European and French literature.

Zabel was actively involved in the literary life of the country in the 1930's. She understood very well the tragic consequences that could ensue an active life and yet continued to openly defend Yeghishe Charents, Aksel Bakunts and other prominent poets. She was reported to the authorities on a false claim, which resulted in her imprisonment and exile. Yessayan was the only woman on the list of over 200 intellectuals and leaders who were targeted for arrest, deportation and death in April 1915. Even though she didn't call herself a feminist, Yessayan now personifies feminist ideals and is a role model for contemporary women

First of all, you must hate mediocrity, that is any pale and despicable position. To become a prominent person, to show personal values, to serve the highest cause – these must you long for. The unhappiest person is the one who leads a mediocre and useless life, regretting internally that she has missed her mission.

Don't be afraid to seem ambitious.

Zabel Yesayan

100 YEARS LATER

(Stand-up Scenario)

**Inside a café, and if the performance is in the open air – in the given location.
The table and chairs, being the only furniture, must be far from the entrance
and placed in such a manner as to be visible to all those present.**

**At a table, without attracting attention and in their usual manner, sit Zapel
Esayan and Shushanik Kurghinyan.**

**Enter Katarine Zalyan and approaching, is searching around, and not finding
whom she is looking for, speaks to one of the spectators.**

KATARINE - I am sorry, please, have you seen Zapel Esayan and Shushanik
Kurghinyan...? We have made an appointment, I am late and...

ZAPEL - (standing up at once). Oh...Mrs Katarine has come... Mrs Katarine...come here,
here, we are here.

KATARINE - And I am looking for you for ages (approaches the women, who have stood
up to meet her, hugs Zapel). Hello, I am sorry for being “a little” late (All are laughing).

ZAPEL - It's Ok. It only took hundreds of years when we last saw each other. (Again all
are laughing).



KATARINE - Well, what could we do, there were refugee children, who needed medical care, time flew, I could not depart from them.

ZAPEL - Please, get acquainted (presents). This lady is Shushanik Kurghinyan, a poetess (to Shushanik). Doctor, Katarine Zalyan-Manukyan, a deputy of Parliament's 2-nd convocation of the First Republic of Armenia, the wife of Aram Manukayn - the founder of the First Republic of Armenia.

SHUSHANIK - Nice to meet you. I am aware of the enormous work you have done in helping Armenian orphans and refugees after the genocide, how selfless you acted in the legislative body during the pandemic, solving the problems of refugees as a member of the medical committee. Alyosha has told me about you.

KATARINE - And to me, he has told me about you. He did compare you to the Italian Ada Negri, stressing your consistent revolutionism.

ZAPEL - But who is Alyosha..?

KATARINE - Alexander Myasnikyan. When he phoned Krasnodar, he again invited me to Armenia, promising that no persecutions would take place, he told me about the intellectuals living in the motherland. It's a pity he had already passed away when I relocated.

ZAPEL - Of course, if he was alive at that time, bolsheviks would not persecute you so much, dear Katarineh (turns towards Shushanik). Sorry Shushanik, that we criticize bolsheviks when you are here...

SHUSHANIK - Nothing strange about it, especially since I was against such deeds of soviet agents. The revolutionary pathos of my poetry was dedicated first of all to the women liberation movement, with a spirit of raising against ignorance and violence.

ZAPEL - (to Katherine) – Have you seen they erected a monument to Aram?

KATARINE - Yes, it's a wonderful monument.

Zapel, can you imagine one day our photos and posters appear on the streets (jokes).

ZAPEL - Oh, I don't know about photos and posters, but imagine they stage a performance about us (laughs).

But the fact that in 1919 Armenian women were the first in the world to get the right to vote and be elected and that three women were elected as deputies of the Armenian Parliament – you, Perchuhi Partizpanyan-Barseghyan and Varvara Sahakyan was thanks to the invaluable contribution of Mr Manukyan. Who would think, that while women in Europe were struggling for voting rights, we already had women members of the Parliament? I am sure after many years, in the 21st century, Armenian women will have achieved more serious results.

SHUSHANIK - By the way, Zapel, related to this, I remember when I read for Charents the poem “Come, my sister”, he said – “Shushanik, you will see, that Armenian woman will be liberated from restraining prejudices”. Aram Manukyan himself would say – “The nation, which does not use the big potential of its daughters in public, state affairs is not complete”.

ZAPEL - Oh, what inspiring words he said. Do you know that I know that poem of yours by heart?



Come let, my sister, raise our voice to the world,
Let us stir our friends for the struggle,
In this dark, unworthy and wretched life,
A straight path, a way let us found.

Come, dear sister, let us unite,
Be part of that great and holiest fight,
Enough being chained, enough being captives,
In misty thoughts, perplexed from want.

Let those our lucky men,
Be not much proud, that they went ahead,
Without us those, sister believe me,
Will not reach safe – will fall apart...

Let us go, dear sister, fearless, united,
All sacrificing for our noble cause,
To the holy light of the free life,
All equal and the fighter worthy must be...


(clapping hands laughingly)

KATARINE - It's a good poem, no doubt, but from your poems, I most love "The song of the eagle's love".

SHUSHANIK-

Hey, dear girl, graceful girl,
So pity you can't fly,
In that cabin silent and wordless,
Like a flower must you dry.
If you would fly, on my cliffs,
I would make you a queen,
When you are sleepy, on my arms
I would rock you with a sweet hymn...
Your eyes are black as night,
Your smile is a bright sun,
Endless skies would not prevail you
But be a subject to you.
How you don't fly in any way,
Who bore you with no wings,
Have you not ever wished,
To fly freely in the skies.







ZAPEL - A century has passed, and life has changed unrecognizably. Women are not now dumb and indoor peasants as they were before. And nothing is surprising that they are prominent through their activity in the Armenian Parliament, in public life and in different fields.

KATARINE - We have much to do in that direction. Though it's the 21st century, not all understand the need for woman's public activity.

SHUSHANIK - Do you remember, Zapel, your letter to your daughter Sophie? That is as pertinent today as ever.

ZAPEL - (stands up, walks a bit away from those present, remembering, like a monologue, with gestures). 1914, 20th of March, Skyutar (a rayon in Stambul). My dearly beloved daughter... Let me skip the beginning.

Here, from here:



... First of all, you must hate mediocrity, that is any pale and despicable position. To become a prominent person, to show personal values, to serve the highest cause – these must you long for. The unhappiest person is the one who leads a mediocre and useless life, regretting internally that she has missed her calling.

Don't be afraid to seem ambitious.

It is necessary to look for your way from now on, and after finding it, walk strictly towards the objective, not heeding advice, by which “practical” men will try to confuse your way.

You are smart, healthy by spirit and body. And you belong to such a nation, which is small in number, is big in its sufferings, struggles, hopes. You are called to take part in its struggle, in the work of fulfilling its wishes. Because of your people and your origin, you are called to play a big part in your country, where you need not only to work but to organize life, even to create it. Can you imagine a more interesting and beautiful field? /in the process Shushanik nods in agreement/

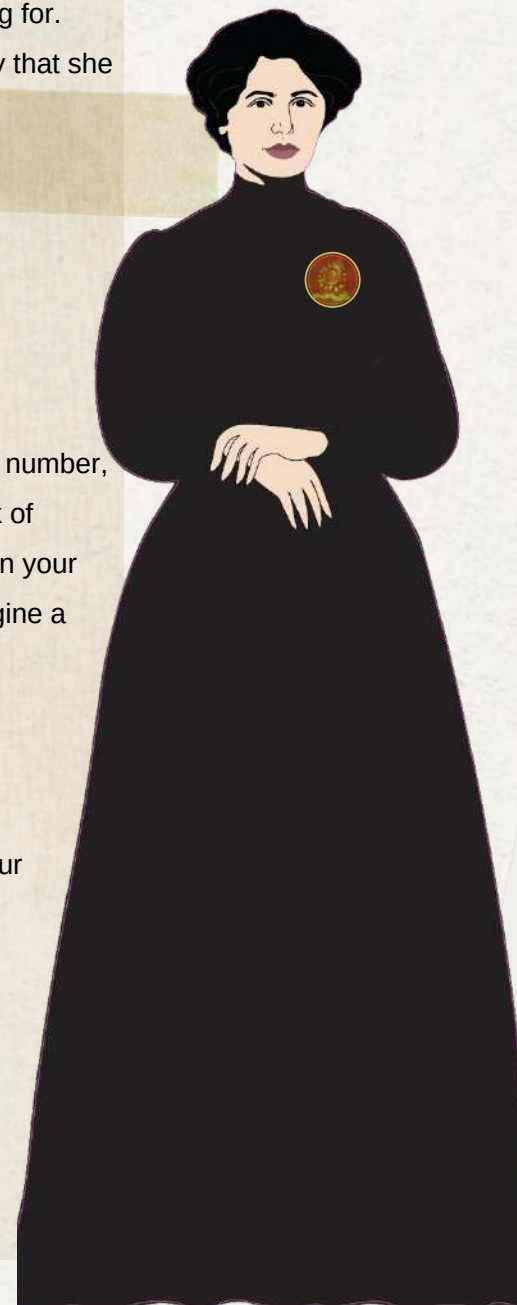
Dear Sophie,

I hope my opinion about your abilities and will is not exaggerated at all and coincides with your longings.

Your mother who craves to see you,

Zapel (gets emotional)

Sorry friends, I will come now (goes out).



SHUSHANIK - Zapel. Zapel...

KATARINE - Shushanik, Zapel has a great talent, great...Arshak Chopanyan has said about her – great Armenian intellectual, prominent national-public figure. And indeed, here many patriotic writings, lectures and articles have become a crown of glory and sadly – a thorns crown, Zapel has become a victim of Stalin's dictatorship. Zapel was doing something incredible for her times, was raising issues of protection of women's rights, not realizing the importance of her work for future generations.

SHUSHANIK - I always voice one of her thoughts on different occasions – “Woman has not come to this world solely to please. Woman has come to develop her mind, intellectual, moral and physical abilities. The ideal of all women, who respect themselves, must be not to restrict themselves to their families, but to become an active benefactor in her country”.

Zapel returns with a lively, bright mood.

ZAPEL - I have good news, dear Katarineh, soon your parliamentary colleagues will join us...a hundred years passed.

KATARINE - Do you mean Varvara Sahakyan and Perchuhi Barseghyan are coming?

ZAPEL - Yes, yes, it's them, who were elected with you and have upheld with honour the noble title of being a member of the Armenian Parliament. Eh, this might be because the heavenly beings are destined to meet each other from century to century. But I remember very well the deep reforms Varvara had made in the educational programs of the newly independent Armenia, and Perchuhi had a great investment in the pedagogy.

SHUSHANIK - Is that the same Perchuhi, who has done selfless patriotic work in the American Care Committee, as well as had published a collection of stories called "After the Storm"?

KATARINE - Yes, that's her. Afterwards, when Armenia was Sovietized, she had to emigrate. She lived in Paris and had a great contribution while running the Fridtjof Nansen bureau.

Zapel's mobile is ringing.

ZAPEL - (she looks at the mobile's display). Here, Perchuhi is again calling...I couldn't get accustomed to these new devices. Yes.? (laughs)

SHUSHANIK - One wonders what they will invent in the 22nd century.

ZAPEL - Yes...? (laughs). Are you lost..? You can't find Masoor Art House? (tells the name of the café or location). What are you saying...? Ok, wait for me, I will come now.

She says Yerevan/or the city where they are in/ has so changed they are lost, don't know how to find the way.
Girls, you go on talking, I will go to bring them here (goes out).

SHUSNANIK - You know dear Katarineh, when I think about the difficult times of our history, in all critical periods there was a woman, who played a considerable role for the nation and the statehood. That has happened in our times as well.

KATARINE - You are right, my dear Shushanik. Starting from Nvard - the wife of the king Ara the Handsome to queen Parandzem and Koshrovanush Bagratuni, Mlqeh – the Artsruni queen, Zapel of Cilicia Kingdom ...

SHUSHANIK - But why remember only our queens, there were many outstanding women in different countries as well: astrophysicist Alenush Teryan - the founder of the observatory of Tehran University, Diana Abgar – writer, publicist and Ambassador of the First Republic of Armenia in Japan in 1919-1920.

KATARINE - Anita Karagoshyan-Conti – the first women oceanology scientist in the world.

SHUSHANIK - The first woman doctor in Turkey was Zaruhi Qavaljyan.

KATARINEH - Countess Mariam Tumanyan.

SHUSHANIK - Maro Nazarbek – active political activist,

KATARINEH - Haykanush Marq,

SHUSHANIK - Journalist Siran Sezan...so many to remember. They all were active in public life as well.

Singing “Zinch u zinch” / the song can be changed/, suddenly enter Zapel, Pertchuhi and VARVARA. Coming forward and hugging those who just came, Shushanik and Katarineh also join the singing of the song.

PERTCHUHI - (to the audience). Did you like our song...? We would sing scores of songs like this with the pupils of the Girls' Club run by me. Come, girls, lets us sing another song...

A song is sung (own preference)

VARVARA - What a nice city Yerevan/or the city, where the performance is held/. Astonishing, very astonishing...

PERTCHUHI - It seemed one moment to me, that I am in a European city. We got lost, and you know on which avenue...? Oh, let me say, this is incredible, we got lost in the middle of the great Komitas avenue... How would this be ever possible ...?



VARVARA - Once, when I was a deputy, I was working on educational programs, but I could not even dream that my motherland will have Science Academy, so many universities, educational institutions, so many teachers and lecturers...

ZAPEL - But it seems that my nation has delegated the education and upbringing of its generation only to women and girls... (laughingly jokes). What did you say about that? Poor things, why would they burden the women so much ..? Dears, we said activation of women, but we didn't mean that we must do everything...everywhere you turn, be it a shop, hospital, library or office, you find women work there... What men do then, I do not understand...?

(everyone laughs at her joke)

The other day a lady was working here, let's call her, it seems we need more tea. Mrs Sylva.

Enter Mrs Sylva

Mrs Sylva, bring us more tea...

SHUSHANIK - A glass of cold water too, please...

WAITER - Will bring it soon.

SHUSHANIK - Hey, dear, but could you bring it without me pushing you..? (laughter again)

PERTCHUHI - Well, enough of criticizing our males, fathers, brothers. They are good, very good.

ZAPEL - Fair enough, we were just teasing you.

VARVARA - Sure it was a joke, but if we speak seriously, they are concerned that if women are as active and pragmatic as they are, the spiritual warmth of the family will be lost. But that is not so. Have we ever, dear sisters, forgotten to show warmth to our families, children. Not at all. Hence, I think that in every work, be it professional, public or political, we women are more powerful when with men, and men in their turn are more powerful when with us, without our active participation progress is impossible.

SHUSHANIK - You will see, a day will come when women will be more active in political life since the country will benefit in case of equal possibilities. Women must be encouraged, supported and given equal opportunities. Much of that opportunities must be taken by women themselves, without waiting to be given, since sometimes if we do not request, we are not provided.

ZAPEL - If things stay as they are, we may become unemployed in the next century (everyone laugh).

(Suddenly a bell is heard. Everyone gets serious)



KATARINE - It's the bell.

SHUSHANIK - Yes. It's time to say goodbye.

VARVARA - So soon? How quick the time passed!

(They embrace each other with eyes full of tears)

KATARINE - Hope to see you soon.

VARVARA - Hundred years later ...

SHUSHANIK - In the next century- again in Yerevan.

ZAPEL - In a more beautiful, better, more powerful motherland.

PERTCHUHI - We'll see...

(all speaking almost at once)

- Farewell, dears.

- Farewell.

(to the audience)

Farewell (like an echo)

Weelll...weelll...weelll...weelll...weelll...

(They are preparing to go out in different directions, but suddenly Katarineh stops and turns)

KATARINE - What if we sing one more song before parting, from our sweet songs?

ZAPEL - Very good idea. This was the first bell. We have five seconds more.

SHUSHANIK - (Correcting) Five MINUTES...

The song "I am daring" is sung, dedicated to a liberated woman.

The End





An episode of the spectacle 100 YEARS LATER, with Nairian vocal ensemble.
Masoor Art House. Yerevan 2021.