

## Preview of the Documentary: "*Concert at Geneva Cathedral*"

**Date:** April 24, 2024

**Time:** 7:15 PM – 9:00 PM

**Location:** Geneva Cathedral

**Presented by:** The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Switzerland

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### Introduction

This documentary highlights the exceptional concert held within the majestic setting of Geneva Cathedral, showcasing Armenian musical heritage alongside iconic works by Armenian and Western composers. Organized by the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the event explores the fusion of cultural legacies through classical music. The program features a selection of sacred and spiritual compositions, including works by the renowned Armenian composer Komitas, contemporary composer Petros Shoujounian, and the legendary German composer Georg Friedrich Händel.

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### Program Overview

#### 1. Komitas – *Miniatures (Excerpts)*

Komitas Vartabed (1869–1935), regarded as the father of Armenian classical music, is revered for preserving Armenian folk music. His *Miniatures* reflect a delicate blend of Armenian melodies with Western classical forms. The excerpts presented evoke the beauty of Armenian culture, inspired by themes of nature, devotion, and human emotion. These pieces showcase Komitas's artistry in distilling the essence of Armenian folklore into compact and expressive works.

#### 2. Petros Shoujounian – *Sinfonietta for Strings No. 1*

Petros Shoujounian's *Sinfonietta for Strings No. 1* is a profoundly spiritual work inspired by Armenian liturgical melodies. The piece consists of three movements:

- **Moderato** – 'ISK I HÉGHMANÉ': Inspired by a 12th-century hymn by Nerses Shnorhali dedicated to Armenian martyrs, this movement conveys solemnity and sacrifice.
- **Adagio** – 'I GÉRÉZMAN HARUTZÉLAYUN': Rooted in medieval Armenian liturgical music, this meditative movement reflects on Christ's resurrection, creating a contemplative and reverent atmosphere.
- **Allegro** – 'GOHAR VARDN': Based on a 10th-century hymn by Grigor Narekatsi, this vibrant movement celebrates Christ's Transfiguration, filled with divine joy and festive energy.

Shoujounian weaves these ancient melodies with contemporary touches, creating a bridge between the sacred and the modern.

### 3. Georg Friedrich Händel – "*Messiah*" (Excerpts)

Händel's famous *Messiah* will conclude the program, transporting the audience into the grandeur of the Baroque era. The selected excerpts highlight the emotional power of this oratorio, including the triumphant "*Hallelujah*" and the delicate "*For Unto Us a Child is Born.*" Händel's profound religious themes resonate deeply alongside the spiritual works of Komitas and Shoujounian, offering an evening of sacred reflection and exultation.

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### Performers and Ensemble

- **Luc Baghdassarian**, renowned conductor and pianist, will lead the orchestra and choir. With an illustrious career across Europe and beyond, his interpretation adds invaluable depth to this eclectic program.
  - **Symphonic Choir of Vevey (CSV)**: Established in 1859, this choir is a cornerstone of Swiss musical culture. Under Luc Baghdassarian's direction, they will perform the choral sections, blending Händel's grandeur with the delicate spirituality of Komitas and Shoujounian.
  - **Orchestra of Symphonic Variations (OSV)**: Founded in 2014, the OSV comprises professional musicians from the Lake Geneva region. Having performed in prestigious venues like Montreux's Stravinski Hall and Geneva's Victoria Hall, they are the ideal ensemble to bring these works to life.
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### About the Composers

- **Komitas Vartabed**: A monumental figure in preserving and revitalizing Armenian folk music, his works, such as the *Miniatures*, reflect a deep connection to Armenia's spiritual and cultural traditions.
  - **Petros Shoujounian**: An Armenian composer, conductor, and violinist of international acclaim, Shoujounian's works blend Armenian liturgical traditions with contemporary orchestral techniques, creating a profound dialogue between the past and present.
  - **Georg Friedrich Händel**: A master of the Baroque era, Händel's *Messiah* is among the most performed works in the Western classical repertoire, offering a universal spiritual experience.
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### The Role of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)

AGBU is dedicated to preserving Armenian culture and heritage. By organizing events such as this concert, it ensures that Armenian traditions and the cultural contributions of Armenian artists continue to thrive worldwide. Through their efforts, AGBU creates a platform for the Armenian community to reconnect with its roots while fostering a deeper understanding of Armenian culture among diverse audiences.

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## **Conclusion**

The *Concert at Geneva Cathedral* on April 24, 2024, promises a rich and diverse musical experience, blending Armenian and Western traditions through the works of Komitas, Petros Shoujounian, and Georg Friedrich Händel. This event celebrates Armenian musical heritage, spiritual reflection, and ongoing cultural dialogue. It stands as a testament to the enduring power of music to transcend borders, unite communities, and preserve cultural identities for future generations.