

# The Relationship between Turkish and Armenian regarding the Ottoman Empire and Contributions of Armenian Artists to the Turkish Opera

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**Abstract**—In history, the relationship between Turks and Armenians was started when Turks entered Anatolia. Before, Armenian people lived in dominion of Persians, Macedonians, Selefkits, Romans, Sasanis, Byzantiniens and Arabs. After Turks had entered Anatolia, Armenian people lived together with the people in the Ottoman Empire, and these two people's living together made Armenians gain citizens' rights in this empire. Armenian people were excused from the military services and some taxes. They got opportunities to promote in trade, craft, farming and administrative affairs. Firstly, the Ottoman Empire met with opera in 1720s via the embassy, and so with the help of Armenian artists, opera was introduced and developed. In this study, the development of terms related to the opera arts in the Ottoman Empire and the importance of Bosco and Naum theatres and the help and contributions of Armenian artists will be analyzed.

**Keywords**—Opera, Turkish opera, Armenian artists, Turkish-Armenian relations.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**D**URING the period which Ottoman Empire was established, Armenians were living disorderly in seignories and small princedoms in the regions such as Eastern Anatolia, Caucasia and Cukurova dependent to the states such as Iran, Byzantia, Georgia and Seljuks. Armenians living under the dominance of peoples such as Persians, Macedonians, Selefkist, Rome, Byzantians, Arabs and Turks got in touch for the first time in the Western parts of Anatolia where they lived as a minority. Osman Gazi, the founder of Ottoman Empire (1258-1326) made the city Bursa the capital city in 1324 and transferred the Armenian leadership to Bursa. According to Anadol [1], Mehmed the Conqueror (Fatih), (1432-1481) who also spoke Armenian amongst the seven foreign languages, brought Hovakim, the Armenian spiritual leader, to Istanbul after the conquest in 1453 and established the Armenian Church through a royal decree in 1461. During this process, the establishment of Istanbul Armenian Church is explained as follows: "Eight years after Mehmed the Conqueror conquered Istanbul, he transformed Armenian Episcopacy in Western Anatolia into the Istanbul Armenian Church in 1461 through a royal decree and this shows the future vision of Fatih and Ottoman Sultans, and it was a typical example of their tolerance to other religions. In the history; the establishment of a chairmanship authority for the

members of other religions by an emperor who belongs to a religion was not seen prior to or after Mehmed the Conqueror [2]. Later on, Yavuz Sultan Selim (1470-1520) conquered South Caucasia and Eastern Anatolia between the years of 1514-1516 and gathered the Armenians in the region within the body of the same community and combined to the Istanbul Patriarchate.

Especially during the period of Mehmed the Conqueror, Armenians given the freedom of thought and faith at maximum level started living in permanent settlement and regularly in the regions such as Erzurum, Sivas, Konya, Antep, Izmit, Adapazarı, Trabzon, Bilecik, Amasya, Merzifon etc. at the end of 19th century, especially in Istanbul. They equally benefited from the opportunities which Ottoman Empire provided for its every citizen who were diligent, honest and productive. Armenians who were excused from military services and certain parts of taxes took important tasks through obtaining opportunities to get promotion on the fields of trade, handicrafts, farming, executive acts, health and art. The period when those relationships between Turks and Armenians were developed and reached to peak and until the end of 19th century is known as "the Golden Age" of Armenians. Armenians who kept on their lives in loyalty to their country, integrated and getting on with the public were regarded as "the Loyal Nation (Millet-i Sadıka)" which means loyal citizens due to such attitudes and loyalty of them. Armenians speaking Turkish very well and even conducting their religious ceremonies in Turkish were assigned to important positions in governmental offices. Among those positions; there were ministers and undersecretaries of public works, navy, foreign affairs, economy, treasury, post-telegram, and royal mint and even they wrote on the matters of Ottoman Empire in Turkish and other foreign languages. Armenians working at governmental positions were called "Amira" and many schools, hospitals, printing presses and libraries were activated by Armenians and thus contributed to the development in health, social and cultural fields.

During the Turkish-Armenian relationships which started during the period of Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) continued until the period of Mahmud II (1785-1839) for almost 350 years; no interferences were performed on the religious and social affairs of Armenians. However, Turkish-Armenian relationships started to corrupt during the period in which Ottoman Empire started to lose its power.

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## II. THE FIRST CONTACTS WITH OPERA DURING THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE PERIOD

In order to celebrate the marriage of the daughter of the Sultan Mehmed IV, Hatica and Vizier Mustafa Pasha II, a general entertainment was organized in Edirne in 17th century. Koprulu Fazıl Ahmet Pasha, the Grand Vizier, asked an opera performance to be added to the entertainment ceremonies and, for that purpose, he made an attempt on bringing a complement opera team from Venice, including performers, musicians, decorators and other performance equipments. However, he failed in doing this due to the shortness of time. Marquie de Nointel, the French ambassador of that period mentioned about the demand of Fazıl Ahmet Pasha in one his reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France. The expressions of Marquie de Nointel in one of those reports clearly reveals that the Ottoman Empire had more or less information about the art of opera and they wanted to show the play to the Sultan, too [3].

The term “opera” was introduced for the first time when the ambassadors of Ottoman Empire presented their detailed observations in their embassy registrations (memories of ambassadorship) after they returned from the western cities, especially Paris and Wien, the centers in every field of art during the royal ceremonies..

In his records of Paris embassy (1720), Yirmisekiz Mehmet Celebi (death 1732) used those expressions to explain opera: “There was a play specific to the city of Paris and it was called opera. We wanted to see it... they took us to the place where the king was present. That special place was built for opera... There was a chair for everyone to sit...they took us the place where the king sat... It was furnished with red velvet. There were various instruments more than hundred in amount... They danced for a while and started the opera. The topic of the opera was incarnating a story. They published a booklet for each story. It was totally thirty parts (libretto). Each one has a name... There was a sultan. He fell in love with the daughter of a person who was not a sultan. He offered a proposal for the girl (he wanted their permission to marry her). Alas! She was in love with the son of a person who was not a sultan. They showed the adventures they had experienced as they were... For example, the sultan was about to enter the girl’s garden, the palace suddenly disappeared, and a garden appeared instead of it, the garden was full of lemon and bergamot trees” [4].

In his embassy book (exilic 1161-1748 ad) which he presented to the sultan, Tugrakesh Mustafa Hattı Efendi who was sent to visit the German Queen Marie Thérèse (1717-1780) after conquering the Belgrade Castle explained his impression upon the question of the queen as follows: While they were watching a musical play in Schönbrunnen Palace in the region of Wien: “This was our opera, an opera which both were new and huge was held on Wednesday night, please tell her that I would like to invite her”[4].

According to Sevengil, ambassador Rasih sent to Petersburg as an ambassador by the Sultan Selim III after the Ottoman-Russian battle ended in a peace-settlement at the beginning of the 19.th century gives detailed information about a Russian

opera he saw. It is known the Sultan Selim III (1761-1808) who had composed significant songs in Turkish classical music since he was a highly qualified composer examining all the embassy records of ambassadors he sent abroad.

In Turkey, Italian opera art and teachers in Italy set an example for the innovation efforts which began in the middle of the 19th century. The first significant example related to this topic is the Ernani opera of Giuseppe Verdi performed by an Italian opera group in 1846 seven years after the reforms.

		World	Turkey
Ernani	Venice	1844	1846
Nabucco	Milano	1842	1846
Macbeth	Florence	1847	1848
I Lombardi	Milano	1843	1850
I Masnadieri	London	1847	1851
Il Trovatore	Rome	1853	1853
Rigoletto	Venice	1851	1854
La Traviata	Venice	1853	1856
I Vespri Siciliani	Paris	1855	1860
Un Ballo in Maschera	Rome	1858	1862
La Forza Del Destino	St. Petersburg	1862	1876
Aida	Cairo	1871	1885

Fig. 1 The years of premiers of Verdi operas in foreign countries and Istanbul

In Istanbul, the years 1846-1877 were time when especially Italian operas were frequently performed. Those operas were performed in three opera buildings such as Bosco, Naum and Gedik Pasha Theatres.

## III. GIOVANNI BARTOLOMEO BOSCO AND BOSCO’S THEATRE

Giovanni Bartolomeo Bosco (January 3, 1793 – March 7, 1863) was an Italian illusionist born in Turin who became one of the greatest conjurers of the 19th century. He is best known for his adroitness with the famous cups and balls. When he was nineteen years old, he was drafted into Napoleon's Army. In 1812, Bosco was wounded during the Battle of Borodino by a Cossack lancer. He pretended to be dead as he noticed someone searching the dead bodies for loot. The looter went through Bosco's things while at the same time Bosco picked the looter's pocket. Bosco was taken as a prisoner to Siberia and entertained the other prisoners and the guards with his magic. After the war, he returned home to Turin in 1814, and studied medicine for a short time. Bosco went on performing his magic for the ruler of Russia as well as the heads of states of Prussia, Sweden, and France [5].

After Ottoman Sultan’s decree, meaning accepting European styles in the conduct of state, Bosco coming to the lands of Ottoman Empire submitted an application letter to Sultan Abdulmecit in 1840 and asked an official permission to build a “playground” and performed plays for a fee in Beyoglu. He was allowed, but Bosco had trouble in finding a convenient field and, as he expressed, he constructed a building “on a street opposite to the schools of law and medicine located in Galata” and performed plays there [3]. It is known that the “Theatre Bosco” which Bosco established through giving his name with a royal decree given by the

Ottoman government on May 21, 1840 started its activity in a field owned by Mihail Naum (1800-1868) in Istiklal Street called "Pera" during that time and built in a round shape. The leaflets were printed and announced in four languages for the introduction of the theatre, and the building was opened as a theatre in August 1840 [6].

In these leaflets, the guidelines of watching theatres such as the procedures of watching theatre, how to go and sit in the theatre were intended to be explained to public. According to Sevengil [3], in the sections in Bosco's leaflets, the procedures of watching theatre are expressed as follows: "There are two types of seats where the audiences sit; one of them is downstairs and the other is upstairs. Namely, parter and balcony... In order to prevent misunderstanding of the audiences about where to sit, the seats are numbered. The audiences are given an entrance paper with numbers on them, the audiences sit on the chair where its number is given on the paper, no other seats are accepted; those entrance papers are valid just for that night, it is not available for the other times. The first class costs twenty five Turkish kuruş and the second class is ten kuruş. The chairs on the first and second rows of the ground floor are reserved for technocrats. There are also various dining tables garnished with food and drinks, everyone who desires may pay for and eat there during the intervals. The people who desire to sit on the seats they want should come earlier to choose their paper with numbers..." In the same leaflet, the audiences were asked not to stand up since they might obstruct the people's sights sitting at the back and the rules such as "There is no fight for seats, it isn't smoked, and no noise is allowed here" were explained to the audiences.

Early on, Bosco put juggles and illusion on the stage. Various theatre plays, pantomimes, comedies and vaudevilles were presented by the craftsmen brought from Europe in 1840. As Sevengil [3] stated, "opera play was performed in Bosco's theatre" in October 1841 by the European performers, and this was determined in an article in the newspaper "Ceride-i Havadis" published in Istanbul by English originated William Churchill and continued with his son Alfred Churchill.

According to Aracı [6], the first opera determined to be performed in Bosco theatre is Norma opera by Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835). Sevengil [3] stated that dramatic presentations in Bosco Theatre continued in the winter of 1841 and until the month of June of 1842. The opera "Belisario" by Gaetano Donizetti which was the first dramatic play was translated into Turkish. After June 1842, Bosco theatre was closed when the theatre season was ended, and it was never opened again.

#### IV. NAUM'S THEATRE

1869 and 1870 are considered the period which opera became spread and Italian operas were frequently performed in Istanbul. During that period, Opera groups from Europe were invited and Naum's theatre played an important role in staging those plays. Naum's theatre which provided huge contribution to the theatre of Tanzimat, the reforming era, and had been serving for almost twenty five years for the introduction and spreading the art of opera activities about the

end of 1844. Bosco's theatre in Beyoglu which was closed in 1842 and never opened was bought by a Christian Armenian called Tutuncuoğlu Mihail Naum and hosted the plays being performed until 1846 after being completely restored. This building made of wood was burned down and Naum rebuilt the huge stone building as a theatre hall.

The first play in Naum's theatre performed by the Italian performers who were brought by Naum who started the business of theatre at the end of 1844 is the opera of "Lucrezia Borgia". This play was performed in the evening of Monday December 23, 1844. According to Sevengil [3], the topic of the play was explained on 209th issue of the newspaper Ceride-i Havadis and emphasized to be composed by Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), brother of Giuseppe Donizetti (1788-1856) who was in the service of Ottoman Empire during that time.

The second play to be performed in Naum's theatre was Gioachino Rossini's (1792-1868) opera of "The Barber of Seville (Il barbiere di Siviglia)" which was performed in January 1845. In 212th edition of the newspaper Ceride-i Havadis, the topics of the play were explained one by one.

The third play to be performed in Naum's theatre was the play called "Parisina" again and composed by Gaetano Donizetti. The play was performed at the end of January in 1845. In 214th edition of the newspaper Ceride-i Havadis, the topic and the composer of the play were praised. After those plays which were performed, two plays by Rossini ("The Thief Magpie" and "Corradino") were performed in 1844-1845 seasons in Naum's theatre where five opera presentations were completed.

1845-1846 season continued with new opera groups invited from Italy. Tutuncuoğlu Mihail Naum took some steps to guarantee the future of his theatre. Naum who wanted to draw the foreigners and Turkish people living in Istanbul and its neighborhoods where transportation was difficult due to the shortness of vehicles and scattered settlement areas organized daytime shows in addition to night shows. In order to explain the topics of the plays performed in foreign languages, moreover, he prepared small booklets to give the Turkish explanations for the plays and distributed them to the audience. The theatre season which began in November 1845 was stopped since the fire occurring in Beyoglu burned the Naum's theatre down; other operas were also interrupted and 1845-1846 season was not completed. The wooden theatre building which was heavily damaged in the fire was rebuilt as a stone building in the same place through the financial aids of the Ottoman Empire and foreign embassies. According to Aracı [6], the architect of the new over-embellished theatre building including the opera box of the Sultan was the British architect William James Smith who also built the embassy building of England in Pera.

The new building was opened for the theatre shows with opera "Macbeth" on October 4, 1848. Sevengil [3] states that Sultan Abdülmecid spontaneously came to the theatre to watch a play a few days after the opening and Naum submitted the sultan an application letter showing his appreciations on the other day.

Altar [4], stated that Turkish premiers of the operas “Jeanne d’Arc” and “I Due Foscari” were performed in Naum’s theatre in 1849-1850 season besides the opera “Macbeth” by Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901). On an advertisement printed on a silk fabric currently available in Ankara Ethnography Museum are the names of three operas by Verdi and the names of Italian performers such as Giuseppina Vilmo, Lucia Badia, Rachele Lucini, Carlo Manfredi, Luici Carizio, Cesare Nati, and Carlo Scalar who participated in the plays.

In consequence of the contribution of the Naum’s theatre to the opera through hosting successful plays, the Ottoman Government gave the authority of performing opera for the following ten years in 1851-1852 theatre season. During that period, Naum invited an opera group of 117 people including solo singers, orchestra, choirs, administrators and other technical staff. Verdi’s opera “I Masnadieri” was also put into stages during that season.

According to Altar [4], it was stated in the newspaper *Ceride-i Havadis* that Turkish premier of opera “Il Trovatore” was performed in Naum’s theatre on November 13, 1853; the audience witnessed magnificent performances of two famous opera singers called Donatelli and Mario Celli and the sultan Abdülmecid attended the first performance as an audience. The Rome premier of this important play was held in January 19, 1853. The execution of Turkish premier of the play performed 10 months after the Italian premier is an important art occasion as to “Opera in Turkey”. The premier dates of the opera “Il Trovatore” in the other countries are as follows; Paris in 1854, Wien in 1854, Warsaw in 1854, St. Petersburg in 1855, London in 1855, New York in 1855, Brussel in 1856, Prag in 1856, and Berlin and Cairo in 1857.

The Italian operas which were put into stages in 1856-1857 season were directed by the famous Italian Orchestra Chief Luici Arditi (1822-1903). According to Sevengil [3], it is stated that the opera was put into stage with the aid of Guatelli the Conductor and Kilingi the Musician on May 30, 1859, and Turkish songs were performed during the interludes. In December 1860, opera and ballet shows were performed in Naum’s theatre on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday evenings while comedy shows in Italian language were performed on the other three days of the week.

When the permission given in 1852 to perform opera for ten years was expired in 1862, Naum reapplied to the government, and the permission was given to him to perform Italian and French plays for five years.

Between the years of 1865 and 1870, six operas of Verdi were performed in Naum’s theatre. Those plays which were directed and staged by Italian Guatelli Pasha, an official in the palace, were the operas of “Atilla”, “Rigoletto”, “Un Balo in Maschera”, “Ernani”, “La Traviata” and “Nabucco”.

Naum’s theatre maintaining its existence for 25 years and giving significant services for the art of opera was burned down in 1870 for the second time. After that disaster, Mihail Naum, the founder of the theatre did not attempt to run the theatre again. Following the fire in 1870, no action was done for a long time related to the art of opera, and Turkish Opera

art started a complete period of stagnation for the following 50 years after the fire.

#### V. ARMENIAN STAGE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Turkish and Armenian people who continued living together during the Ottoman Empire interacted with each other in culture and art as well as all the other topics, and Armenian artists had significant activities related to the popularization of the art of opera-operettas. Tutuncuyan [7] pointed out those theatre movements which gained importance during that period: Between the years of 1859 and 1862, the theatre movement which began in local schools and houses in Ortakoy and Haskoy was transferred to Beyoglu Naum’s theatre by Sirabiyon Hekimyan and thus, the foundations of Oriental Theatre were formed. Numerous artists such as Eshkiyan, Fasulyaciyani, Manikyan, Bengliyan, Tiryantis, Acemyan, and Arusyak who were known to be the best performers of Armenian Theatre in Turkey were all trained in this theatre.

The period between the years of 1867 and 1878 is the most magnificent era of Turkish Armenian theatre through the theatre established by Hagop Gulluyan (Vartovyan) (Agop the Rosy) (1840-1902). Tutuncuyan [7] states that Vartovyan had significant contribution to the formation and development of Turkish theatre because nobody in that period even thought about performing Turkish shows except Vartovyan. Solo and dance shows which Vartovyan theatre tried led to first phases for the performances of the operettas. Within the repertory of the theatre, there were tragedies and dramas of Moliere, Voltaire, Victor Hugo, and Alexandre Dumas beside the operettas such as “Girofle Grofla”, “Orphee”, “Le Brigands” and “Pamela”.

In Magakyan’s theatre established by B. Magakyan between the years of 1872 and 1873 and employed numerous performers such as Atamyan, Sisak, Minakyan, Tiryantis, Hirachia, Siranush, and Asdgik; all the shows were performed in Armenian language.

Bengliyan’s theatre which was active between the years of 1877 and 1887 and only hosted operettas had significant importance in the history of Ottoman-Armenian theatre since no other theatre groups were interested in the type of operetta before and later. According to Tutuncuyan [7], Bengliyan’s theatre experienced its most magnificent period in Edirne, Greece, Izmir and Egypt although established in Istanbul. In the theatre where high quality plays could be compared to the top level operettas of Europe, all the decorations, costumes and stage arrangements were handmade by Bengliyan. Numerous performers such as Siranush, Karakashyan sisters, Sazik, Asdgik, Bisdos, Araksiyan, Agavni Zabel, Minakyan, Guregyan, Kuyumcuyan, Y. Benliyan, Tiryantis and Caprast were employed in this theatre; Bengliyan’s theatre had great successes even in the foreign countries. The music of Cuhaçyan who was also in the staff list of the theatre was rather effective in spreading the fame of the theatre. Within the repertory of Bengliyan’s theatre which had successively performed many operettas and vaudevilles; the classical works of Offenbach and Donizetti beside the operettas such as

“Leblebici Horhor”, “Köse Kahya” and “Arif” composed by Cuhacıyan were performed.

Fasulyacıyan’s theatre established in Bursa by Fasulyacıyan and his team, and active between the years of 1880 and 1885 was supported by the Bursa Gouverneur, Ahmet Vefik Pasha. Its repertory consisted of very simple comedies, and the language of the performed plays was generally Turkish.

Manikyan’s theatre was a theatre group established by Manikyan who was a very talented performer and a masterly director, and it was active between the years of 1885 and 1908. According to Tutuncuyan [7], it was an unlucky group which continuously had to overcome the preventions of some capricious and sinister people and experiencing split-ups and gatherings due to maladjustments and senseless conflicts. The corruption of the team and due to its transformation into the mentality of trading house all caused the split-up of Manikyan’s theatre.

## VI. ARMENIAN ARTISTS CONTRIBUTING TO TURKISH OPERA

### A. Dikran Cuhacıyan

Dikran Cuhacıyan born in Beyoğlu, Istanbul in 1837 is known as the founder of the first opera institution in the Ottoman Empire. According to And [8], Cuhacıyan beginning to play the piano and compose songs at his twenties became the music director of Haskoy Local Theatre in 1859. In the opening of the theatre, the play “Let’s Go Back to old Ages” which he composed over the text of K. Caprasciyan was performed. He developed his music culture in Milan until 1864 and then returned to Istanbul to give music lessons. Inspiring from Verdi, he composed the opera of “The 2nd Aria” (Olympia).

Çuhacıyan who headed for the art of operetta in 1872 completed his first work in that category and called “Arif’s Trick” in autumn 1872. Çuhacıyan who established Ottoman Opera Theatre put his work called “Leblebici Horhor Ağa (Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller)” on the stage. The most important plays which Çuhacıyan increased his fame through were “Arif’in Hilesi (Arif’s Trick)”, “Köse Kahya (The Beardless Butler)” and “Leblebici Horhor Ağa (Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller)”. Another work which Çuhacıyan composed but its texts are missing today is an operetta called “Zemire” with the topic of mythology. And [8] stated that the opera “Zemire” was performed by the French group Bennati in 1891 and the Italian group Franzi in 1894. Moreover, there is another work of Çuhacıyan which not much information is available about it. It is a stage work called “Indiana”. According to And [8], this work of Çuhacıyan was composed through inspiring from the work of Abdülhak Hamit, “Duhteri Hindu”. And [8] states that the play “Mektep Seyri (The School Master)” which was expressed to appear on the newspapers of that period and Şinasi’s “Şair Evlenmesi (The Marriage of Poet)” was composed by Çuhacıyan. Dikran Çuhacıyan was caught a serious illness in 1897 and died one year later in 1898.

### B. Mardiros Munakyan

He was born in Hasköy, Istanbul in 1837. He is one of the most commonly admired players. Between the years 1873 and 1878, he reached the peak of his mastership and personated significant characters from numerous theatre plays. Among the theatre plays he acted part are; “Leblebici Horhor Ağa (Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller)”, “Güzel Helen (The Beautiful Helen)”, “Girofle, Girofla”, “Les Brigands”, II.nd Arşak”, “Arif’in Hilesi (Arif’s Trick)”, and “Köse Kahya (The Beardless Butler)”. He gained fame in our country and especially in Egypt through the 1.st BARITON roles he took.

### C. Serovpe Bengliyan

He was born in Beyoğlu, Istanbul in 1835. According to Tütüncüyan [7], he showed a maximum effort to put some European operettas besides various choir and solo works he executed; he provided Dikran Çuhacıyan, the great musician, to Turkish-Armenian art history. Generally, he played the roles of bad man and succeeded in affecting the audiences through his flexible movements, his appealing look, his body and his strong bass voice. Bengliyan, worked as a music teacher and stage manager in addition to acting. In his repertory, there are vaudevilles and operettas which are presented in European stages as well as theatre plays. He and the Vartovyan Theatre performed the plays such as “A Barba (vaudeville)”, “Musicians (comedy-vaudeville)”, “Pamela (comic opera)”, “Telemak (operette)”, “Arif’s Trick (operetta)”, and “Bohemia Bandits (operetta)” for the first time.

Bengliyan also executed very creative works as a stage decorator. In accompany with Fasulyacıyan, he successfully designed many places such as Heaven, Hell, Middle Age Chateaus and Temples and applied in the stage. With the team of opera, comedy, operetta and vaudeville; he performed many barnstormers within the country and abroad and they achieved huge success especially in Greece and Egypt. Bengliyan undertook the 1.st Bass in the operettas. Among the plays he successfully performed, there are the characters of “Jupiter in Orfi-Osfi”, “Merzug in Girofle-Girofla”, “Agamemnon in Beautiful Helen”, “The Head-Bandit in Les Brigands”, “Arif in Arif’s Tricks” and “The Chickpea Seller in Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller”. Bengliyan died in Alexandria in 1900.

### D. Tavit Tiryants

He was born in Beyoğlu, Istanbul in 1840. He joined Bengliyan’s team in 1878 and joined the tours in the country and abroad. In addition to his leading parts almost in all the Mogliere plays, he took part as a leading comedy male role (Grand Premier Comique) in the operettes such as “Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller”, “The Beardless Butler”, “Arif’s Tricks”, “Girofle-Girofla”, and “Madam Angot’s Daughter”. In accompany with the Bengliyan’s team in İzmir Elhamra Theatre in 1887; he successfully performed the roles such as “Kalkas in Beautiful Helen”, “Pietro in Les Brigands”, “Cingöz in Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller” and “Mascott in Orphee”. Tiryants died in Tbilisi in 1899.

#### *E. Yeranuhi Karakasyan*

She was born in Uskudar, Istanbul in 1848. Although the date she died is unknown, it was determined as 1902 or 1924 by Tütüncüyan [7]. Her fame spread out as a highly talented theatre player. She is known to have a special talent about especially performing the male roles. Between the years of 1878 and 1881, she joined the tours with Bengliyan's operette team and she received the title of "The Master Solist" as a result of his outstanding success in the operettas of "Girofle-Girofla" and "The Beautiful Helen".

#### *F. Takvor Nalyan*

He was born in Hasköy, Istanbul in 1843. He generally overtook the roles of the 1.st Baritone. According to Tütüncüyan [7], Nalyan who was known as a tireless translator, translated the majority of vaudvilles and operettes in the Turkish repertory of Vartovyan. Takvor Nalyan wrote the comedy called "Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller" which exists in Turkish Armenian Theatre and regarded as a masterpiece. This work which gained more fame with the composition of Dikran Çuhacıyan evoked admiration not only in Istanbul but also in the whole East and foreign countries where it was performed. Takor Nalyan died of tuberculosis at his early age in 1876.

#### *G. Haçik Papazyan*

He was born in Balat, Istanbul in 1845. Papazyan who is famous as a good tragedy artist is known to take Tenor roles in musical plays and had a light and soft voice. He successfully performed the roles of "Paris in Beautiful Helen", and "Hurşit Bey in Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller". Papazyan died in Kumkapı, Istanbul in 1877.

#### *H. Dikran Tosbatyan*

He was born in Üsküdar, Istanbul in 1852. Date of his death is unknown. According to Şarasan, Tosbatyan who acted in the stages with convenient roles in all the plays of Mogliere proved his abilities in play in "Jeune Premier" roles. In addition to his ability to act, he had a sonorous voice and he acted important roles in "The Beautiful Helen" and "Madam Angot's Daughter".

#### *I. Mikayel Çaprast*

He was born in Bucharest in 1848. Çaprast who generally played the roles of doctor, bartender, and hotel owner in dramas is known for his mastery in his mimics and gestures as well as his dancing capacity at high levels. He was closely interested in all types of European dances in addition to the ballroom dances such as "cancan" and "quadrille" and oriental dances such as "flamenco", "çengi", "köçek" and "zeybek".

The brightest period of Mikayel Çaprast's stage life is the time when he performed first class operettes and vaudvilles he shared the stage with Bengliyan Operetta Group. During that period, Çaprast successfully performed the characters such as "Ajax in the Beautiful Helen", "Trents in the Madam Angot's Daughter", "Cingöz in the Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller", "Veli in the Beardless Butler", "Kevork in the Arif's Tricks" "The Jew in the Zeybekler", and

"Groseyon in the Carnival Bride". Mikayel Çaprast died in 1907 and was buried to Üsküdar Armenian Cemetery.

#### *J. Verkine Karakasyan*

Verkine Karakasyan, the youngest sister of Yeranuhi Karakasyan, was born in Istanbul in 1856. Verkine Karakasyan who started her stage life singing lyric songs in Üsküdar Aziziye Theatre with her clear and effective voice continued her art life through soprano roles she performed in Bengliyan Operetta Group. Among the characters which was animated by Verkine Karakasyan who combined her singing style and the character of the role she overtook; there are "Oreste in the Beautiful Helen", "Justine in Pamela", "Clerette in the Daughter of Madam Mangot", "Gilbert in Fru-Fru", "Fadime in Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller", and "Gül in the Beardless Butler". Verkine Karakasyan died in 1933.

#### *K. Asdğik (Amber Kantarcıyan)*

Asdğik was born in Pera, Istanbul in 1852. In addition to high-powered important roles she overtook in the plays performed in the Ottoman Theatre Group, Vartovyan Theatre and Ortaköy Stage; she also worked for Bengliyan Operetta Company. She achieved great success through contralto roles she performed on the tours at home and abroad, especially, in İzmir, Greece and Thesaloniki stages which she participated with Bengliyan Operetta Company. Among the roles she performed, there are "Lange in the Daughter of Madam Angot", Aurore in Girofle-Girofla" and "Paris in the Beautiful Helen". Asdğik died in the year of 1884.

#### *L. Siranuş (Merope Kantarcıyan)*

Siranuş was born in Beyoğlu, Istanbul in 1857. According to Tütüncüyan, the most famous performer among the Armenian artists is Siranuş. Siranuş experienced the most productive part of her life in Bengliyan Operetta Group and performed the roles such as "Helene in the Beautiful Helen", "Lange in the Daughter of Madam Angot", "Euridis in Orphee", "Frangoletto in Les Brigands", "Marascenne in Girofle-Girofla", "Fatma in Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller", "Meryem in Arif's Tricks", "Gül in the Beardless Butler" and "The Girl in Pink". Although the characters of Frangoletto and Marascenne she performed are Tenor roles, Siranuş successfully performed those roles. Siranuş who started to work in Russia Armenian Theatre in 1897 died in 1932.

#### *M. Şazik Köylüyan*

Şazik Köylüyan was born in Pera, Istanbul in 1854. Şazik Köylüyan who performed music activities with Dikran Çuhacıyan, started her stage career in Vartovyan Theatre and she started acting with the Role of Meryem in "Arif's Tricks". According to Şarasan, Şazik who is the wife of Hovhannes Acemyan who was the first Turkish Armenian to be trained in European conservatories gained her fame through prima donna roles in almost all musical shows and operettas of the period. Şazik Köylüyan became the beloved of people through her roles of "Fatma in Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller" and "Gül in the Beardless Butler". Şazik successfully acted in the operettas and vaudvilles such as "The Dancers", "The Girl in

Pink”, “Zeybekler” and “The Carnival Bride”. Şazik Köylüyan died in 1895.

#### *N. Koharik Şirinyan*

Koharik Şirinyan was born in Istanbul in 1860. Between the years of 1878 and 1880, she overtook the soprano roles and the characters of young lover in Turkish Armenian stage. With her superior ability, she is one of the most important artisans of Bengliyan Operetta Group. Koharik Şirinyan successfully performed the roles of “Fiorella in Les Brigands”, “Fatma in Horhor Ağa the Chickpea Seller” and “Prince Miniature (Tenor) in the Mongol the Great” and became one of the most famous musical show players through taking important roles in almost all tragedies in the repertory of Bengliyan Operetta Group.

#### *O. Harutyun Aleksanyan*

Harutyun Aleksanyan was born in Çengiler Köyü, Bursa in 1857. While he was a student at his early ages, he successfully played the role of Nerses in “The II.nd Arşak” and started his career. He joined the Vartovyan Group and took the roles of “bad man”. Harutyun Aleksanyan died in 1917.

#### *P. Dikran Sancakçıyan*

Dikran Sancakçıyan was born in 1845. Between the years of 1864 and 1865, he started his art career in the Orient Theatre and then continued with Bengliyan Operetta Group. He successfully performed the roles such as doctor, notary, policeman, and hotel manager.

#### *Q. Zabel Hekimyan*

Zabel Hekimyan was born in Istanbul in 1856. She joined Bengliyan Operetta Group in 1884.

#### *R. Bisdos Araksiya*

Bisdos Araksiya was born in 1852. She joined Bengliyan Operetta Group in 1878. Thanks to the clarity of her voice and her perfect articulation, she gained the sympathy of the audiences and became famous as a dramatic player. Bisdos Araksiya died in Istanbul in 1882.

#### *S. Dikran Matteosyan*

Dikran Matteosyan was born in 1850. He began his career in Vartovyan Theatre in 1872 and then he took second comic roles in Bengliyan Operetta Group and Mınakyan Theatre. Dikran Matteosyan died in 1915.

#### *T. Annik Çuhacıyan*

Annik Çuhacıyan was born in 1855. Annik who is known as a successful singer and a talented dancer played the role of Constance in the play “Pamela”.

#### *U. Rupen Binemeciyan*

Rupen Binemeciyan was born in Edirne in 1857. Rupen Binemeciyan who worked as a prompter in Bengliyan Operetta Group at first actively started performing roles later on. Rupen Binemeciyan died in Istanbul in 1910.

## VII. CONCLUSION

When the history of Ottoman Empire is analyzed, it may be seen that Turkish-Armenian relations covered approximately 350 years. In accordance with the relations began in 1461 with the establishment of Istanbul Armenian Patriarchy, continued until the period of Sultan Mahmut II; Turks lived together with Armenians and other numerous nations and formed an inseparable part of the society. During the time they lived together, Turks and Armenians mutually affected each other in culture and art fields as well as almost other fields. Armenian artisans had huge efforts and significant contributions to every branch of stage arts, to Turkish society and to performing of those branches of art.

In conclusion, it is seen that the most important contributions to the art of Opera were provided by Mihail Naum who had bought the closed Bosco’s theatre and brought it in the stage life during a period when the arts of opera and theatre were performed under the same roof.

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