



AZERBAIJANI AMERICAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

A WOMAN'S VOICE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE I, OCTOBER– DECEMBER, 2008

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the first issue of Women's Voice, the newsletter created by Azerbaijani American Women's Association!

AAWA is a non-governmental, non-political organization created by women and is dedicated to identifying and addressing the issues concerning Azerbaijani women, to increasing awareness of Azerbaijan and its current issues in American society, to preserving our cultural heritage, and to carrying out philanthropic activities that would benefit Azerbaijani women living in the U.S., in Azerbaijan and beyond.

Our staff consists of three officers - professional women and dedicated mothers, who juggle between their careers, families, community commitments and work for AAWA strictly on a volunteer basis. Coming from various backgrounds our and living in different places our members and we certainly have something in common - our unconditional love for our motherland and willingness to strengthen the bond between our birth country and places of current residence.

During our visit to Azerbaijan this summer we were gratified to see how many women's organizations are actively functioning in Baku. Initiatives of AAWA were warmly welcomed and supported by the **Women's Society of the Republic (Respublika Qadınlar Cemiyəti)** that I worked for in the past. It was rewarding to see that many other organizations in Azerbaijan, including professional associations expressed their willingness and readiness to work with AAWA and to see how many people supported us in our journey with their words, enthusiasm and belief.

We are happy to create this additional channel of valuable communication as an extension of our commitment to spread the information and expertise. This is supposed to help to strengthen the community and help Azerbaijani women living all over the world, and disseminate the knowledge of Azerbaijani culture and arts to the international community. The purpose of Women's Voice is to celebrate professional achievements of Azerbaijani women working in various fields in different parts of the world; honor the accomplishments of being great moms and dedicated employees. We intend to share the knowledge and experience by publishing their stories or maybe tips that they have.

By introducing women-experts on our pages we would like to show others what is possible to achieve. You don't have to be an expert in writing to have your voice heard through our pages. We will interview you for our newsletter, publish the articles and the photos that you send to us. We are always open to suggestions and ideas. Our newsletter will be sent out to you via email on a quarterly basis.

Enjoy!

Beniz Spencer (Arifqizi)
President of AAWA



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT	1
OUR WOMEN, OUR PRIDE	2
EAST MEETS WEST	4
WHAT'S COOKING?	6
EXPERT BOARD	7
MISCALLENIOUS	7

WE ARE ON THE WEB!

WWW.AAWAUSA.ORG

*Suggestions? Ideas? Want to
Become a Member?*

DROP US A LINE AT:

info@aawausa.org

OUR WOMEN, OUR PRIDE

SONA ASLANOVA, THE HONORARY ARTIST OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN



Sona Aslanova

Native of Baku born in 1924, Honored Artist of Azerbaijan Republic, Sona Aslanova, entered the path leading to the big stage with the help and guidance of the eminent Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov, who is referred to as the Father of Classical Azerbaijani Music. Despite her epoch's dominating societal restrictions against women in the field of performing arts Sona Aslanova not only succeeded in her career but also left a visible trace in the music history of Azerbaijan.

She contributed around 60 performances to the Golden Foundation of the Azerbaijani Republic's Radio and Television. Among them are folk songs and vocal pieces from the world's classic heritage. She worked side by side with such prominent figures in the arts as singers Bulbul and Rashid Behbudov and is remembered by generations for the remarkably unique characters that she created on the stage. Among her most famous roles there is Nigar from *Koroghlu*, Asya from *Arshin Mal Alan*, and Asli from *Asli and Kerem*, all three operas by Uzeyir Hajibeyov. During the years of her active career, Sona Aslanova commendably represented Azerbaijan in the other Soviet republics and a

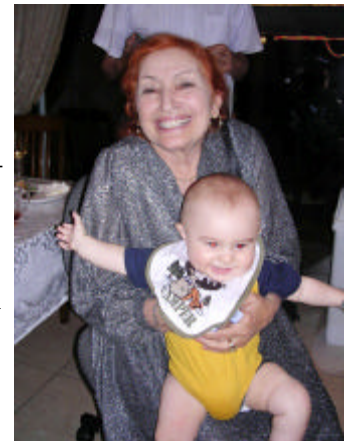
number of foreign countries.

Currently Sona Aslanova resides in California, US. Even in her mature ages she retained the beauty of her voice and her unique vocal talent. Young at heart and still in love with her art, Sona Aslanova has one cherished dream these days and the dream is to visit her motherland, to walk through the streets where she grew up, and to perform her songs in her home town on the sandy sea side.

Unfortunately her recent health issues have been preventing the singer and the opera star from making her dream come true. AAWA tries to provide her with moral support by constantly staying in touch and we look forward to every time when we can talk to her or visit her again.

As a matter of fact Sona Aslanova is AAWA member. But first of all she is a caring mother who considers herself blessed for having her life partner and soul mate Kamal next to her, their two sons and all their grandchildren. One of the grandchildren inherited the love for arts and the talent that runs in the family. This is Lala Ragimova (www.lalaragimov.com) who has a beautiful voice like her Grandmother and at the same time is a gifted artist. Her brush creates works in various genres of classical drawing and painting, including still lives, portraits and many others.

Taking into account Sona Aslanova's contributions to Azerbaijani music history, AAWA sent a formal request to the corresponding governmental agencies of Azerbaijani Republic to consider granting Sona Aslanova the title of the People's Artist of Azerbaijan. Last year we received a letter from the Ministry of Culture notifying that the request is currently under consideration. We are hoping that one day Sona Aslanova will be granted the honor that she had worked hard for. *A Woman's Voice* and AAWA are wishing Sona Aslanova to retain a good health and to keep a smile on her face.



OUR WOMEN, OUR PRIDE

ELMIRA SULEYMANOVA, THE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN



Elmira Suleymanova
Photo source: www.ria.az

A well-known scientist and internationally and nationally recognized advocate of civil rights, Elmira Suleymanova is one of the most active women in Azerbaijan.

Elmira Suleymanova was born in 1937 in Baku, Azerbaijan. In 1959 she graduated from the faculty of Chemistry at the Baku State University and started to work at the Institute of Petro-chemical processes of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

Elmira Suleymanova holds a Ph.D., is a Doctor of Chemistry (1980), a Professor (1982), and a Member of the New York Academy of Sciences (1997). She is also the author of more than 210 scientific publications and over 40 innovations.

Elmira Suleymanova has received numerous awards for her relentless defense of Human Rights. In 1998 she was honored by the Rochester University (New York, USA) as one of 100 World Heroines, in recognition of her courageous acts and lifetime achievements furthering the cause of Woman Rights and for serving as a role model for women and girls around the world.

On the eve of the 10th Anniversary of Children's Rights Convention Elmira Suleymanova founded the Azerbaijani Child-to-Child Peace Network and School of Children's Leadership, created Alliance of NGOs that consolidated more than 50 women and children organizations, working on protection and promotion of child rights. Elmira Suleymanova is also the founder of the first Social Resources Center for the Elderly in Azerbaijan, launched in 2001.

On July 2, 2002 Elmira Suleymanova was elected by the Country Parliament to the Position of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. She has been relentlessly advocating human rights in the country ever since. Since 2003 Elmira Suleymanova is also a Member of the International Ombudsman Institute and the European Ombudsmen Institute.

In 2003 in New York City, an avid advocate of human rights Elmira Suleymanova was awarded the International Peace Prize for creating a Harmony of Humankind.

Keep up the good work, Elmira khanum! We are proud of you!

To read more about Elmira Suleymanova and her activities in the sphere of human rights, visit:

<http://www.ombudsman.gov.az>

WHERE EAST & WEST COME TOGETHER

BY NATELLA ISAZADEH

As the plane was about to land at Baku International airport I was looking at the lights of the night city my heart pounding in anticipation and my 6-year-old sitting by my side. The whole trip was about seeing all the changes that took place in Azerbaijan within the past seven years and of course showing to my daughter for the first time the place that until now she called "Her Mom's country".

The construction both on the road leading to Baku and inside the capital city was getting in our way, but later on looking at the sites with freshly completed renovation, I thought that the outcome might justify the temporary inconvenience.

Today this 1500 year old city is represented by four different types of architecture. Besides the Medieval Walled city, there is a part of town built during the first oil boom of mid 19th century through 1920. This area is rich in eclectic European style buildings designed by prominent architects who were hired and brought to Baku from countries such as Poland, Germany, Austria, Italy, France, Russia, etc. Then there is the Soviet era Baku of dull concrete monoliths and finally the most modern offices and residential buildings developed within the past 15 years or so - some truly upscale, some of questionable quality and value as they interfere with the existing skyline.



**Palace of Happiness,
main wedding venue of Baku**

The old city, **Icheri Sheher** located within the walled fortress is the first site in Azerbaijan added by UNESCO to the World Heritage List with its cobbled narrow streets and several historical monuments. One of them is the Shirvan Shahs Palace, the residence of dynasty of medieval rulers of 15th century. Another one is the Maiden's Tower (Giz Qalasi), the main landmark of Baku – an eccentric tower built around 7th-8th centuries to serve as a light house, defense fortification, astronomical observatory or Zoroastrian temple. The Walled City also has several mosques with the most famous one among them Juma Mesjid (Friday Mosque) which used to house a Rug & Art museum during Soviet times but is now returned to its original purpose.



**Maiden Tower ,
the unofficial symbol of Baku**

As the largest city in the Caucasus and because of its past great prosperity, Baku has historically been one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in the Soviet Union. It is still a cosmopolitan city: with the majority of population being ethnic Azerbaijanis and Muslims by faith, other ethnic groups are well represented here as well. There are several Jewish Synagogues, Orthodox churches, a German Lutheran Church and various ethnic cultural centers. Main language spoken in the city is Azeri (or Azeri Turkish), in addition to which many people speak excellent Russian and the majority of people of my generation and younger speak English.

Foreign cultures are also represented through western inspired discothèques, Jazz clubs, Irish & British style pubs. Variety of **world's cuisines** is available in Baku. Besides restaurants serving Azeri & Turkish kabobs, dolmas, etc you will

find other former Soviet cuisines represented by Russian, Ukrainian and Georgian restaurants; Mediterranean— by Lebanese and Greek food places; Asian— by Chinese, Thai & Indian; Western— by Mexican, American, Italian, French restaurants and more. **Drama, ballet and opera** are much appreciated in Baku. There are a number of theaters with diverse repertoires drawn both from rich local collections and international heritage. The vibrant city life is also supported by numerous museums, galleries, movie theaters and concert halls hosting sizeable performers.



Opera and Ballet Theater

Continued on Page 5

WHERE EAST & WEST COME TOGETHER

BY NATELLA ISAZADEH

Continued from Page 4:

A wide and for the most part of it shady pedestrian walkway runs downtown along the side of the Caspian Sea. It is a waterfront park mainly referred to as **Boulevard**. From there you can take a boat tour of Baku Bay that lasts about 40 min.



View of Baku

Even if you are not on a sightseeing tour in Baku, you still have to see Nizami street, known here as **Torgovaya (Shopping) Street and Fountain Square** that it leads to. This is a pedestrian street along the center of Baku that has many shops & dining places. Street vendors are selling arts and antiques here and the street is busy any day of the week, any time of the day. People are dressed in latest fashion and come here to see and to be seen. I only had a little exposure to the night life of Baku but was amazed by the number of places that are open until early hours of morning and the number of people that are outside all night long.

My personal favorite is **Mountainous Park** that was an amusement park in the past but is now partly dedicated to the graveyard called the Martyrs' Lane in memory of those who lost their lives during the Black January (January 20, 1990) and Nagorno-Karabakh war (1988-1994). It requires endurance to climb all those stairs to get to the top of the mountain but you won't regret you did so - the best panorama of Baku opens from there. You can enjoy the view in daylight or at night sitting in traditional Azerbaijani style outdoors tea houses called *chaykhana*. The tea is poured here in authentic small pear-shaped glasses and is served with traditional Azerbaijani snacks and pastry. And the whole city looks like if you have it inside your palm.

Summer in Baku is hot and humid and many people use any chance they get to escape the heat. There are several nice sandy **beaches** around Baku and a few western type resorts built with swimming pools, fast food outlets, fine restaurants, Disco, game halls, spa, water sports, Wi-Fi Internet and other entertainment. We visited one of them called Amburan Beach Club on the north coast of Absheron Peninsula. The landscape & the food were great and the amenities reminded of some of the upscale western resorts that I have been to.



Fountain Square

While I was interested in capturing the changes and catching up with the family and friends from decades ago, my daughter had her own agenda of trying as many rides as there were in every park we saw and getting as spoiled as she could with all the attention she was getting from everyone. Her favorite place was not even Baku, but **Qusar**, the city 170 km to the northwest of Baku that we visited during the trip. Qusar is a green and picturesque place located on the right bank of the river of the same name and under the backdrop of mount Shahdag. My daughter thought she found there a paradise on Earth with roomy houses, shady yards and fruitful gardens, where no one tells you what to do or where to go.



Qusar Nature

All in all we had a lot of exciting and fine memories and my daughter fell in love with everything she saw in Azerbaijan. She didn't want to leave that place and interestingly enough by the end of our trip it was nothing but "her" country. It warmed my heart to hear that and I knew one thing for sure: as long as the connection is established, this young person now has a stronger prospect of growing in appreciation of her roots.

WHAT'S COOKING? SALAD "MIMOSA"

Serves 6 to 10

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450 g) skinless boneless chicken breast halves
 1/2 teaspoon salt, for boiling
 1/2 cup walnuts, finely chopped
 3 medium potatoes, boiled and peeled
 2 eggs, boiled and peeled
 3 medium carrots, boiled and peeled
 salt, to taste



For the Dressing:

6 tablespoons sour cream mixed with 6 tablespoons light mayonnaise - use about 2 tablespoons each time dressing is called for. Use more dressing for a moister salad.

Note: You can also use creamy plain yogurt for the dressing (it shouldn't be sour). Alternatively, use sour cream or mayonnaise only. If using mayonnaise only, be extra careful not to oversalt your salad since mayo is pretty salty by itself.

To Garnish:

gouda cheese (In Azerbaijan: Holland Pendiri), shredded

Place the chicken in a pot with about four cups of water. Add salt. Bring to a boil. Cook for about 20 minutes or until the chicken is tender. Drain and set aside. When cool enough to handle, cut the chicken into thin strips using a knife or tear it into small pieces using your hands.

Grate the boiled and peeled potato, carrots, and eggs on a coarse side of a box grater or in a food processor.

On a round serving plate, EVENLY layer the ingredients in the following order (do not mix!)

half the chicken
 dressing
 half the walnuts
 half the potato
 salt
 dressing
 half the eggs
 salt
 half the carrots
 dressing

Repeat in the same order with the remaining ingredients, finishing with carrots. Spread some dressing over the top and around the sides of the salad to give it a cake-looking appearance. Top the salad with some shredded Gouda Cheese. If desired, sprinkle with some pomegranate seeds. *Nush Olsun!*

For more delicious recipes from Azerbaijan visit:

www.azcookbook.com

**Have a recipe you want to share?
 Email it to us and we will feature it
 in our next issue!**

AZERBAIJANI AMERICAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Our Staff
Beniz Spencer (Arifgizi), President
Natella Isazadeh, Vice President
Farida Buyuran, PR & Membership

Our Contacts:

P.O.Box 27622
Anaheim, CA 92809
Phone: 951-372-9193
562-899-1106

info@aawausa.org
benizspencer@yahoo.com
www.aawausa.org

Make a Note!

Upon the mutual consent of AAWA Board,
membership fees are eliminated beginning
from this year.

To join AAWA simply email us at
info@aawausa.org.

AAWA's doors are open for everyone!

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

IF YOU

want to become AAWA officer
want to become AAWA member
want to join our expert board (see below)

OR IF YOU

have an interesting story to share
want to make announcements or place an ad
in our newsletter

please email us at info@aawausa.org

We want you to be part of our future newsletters!

JOIN OUR EXPERT BOARD!

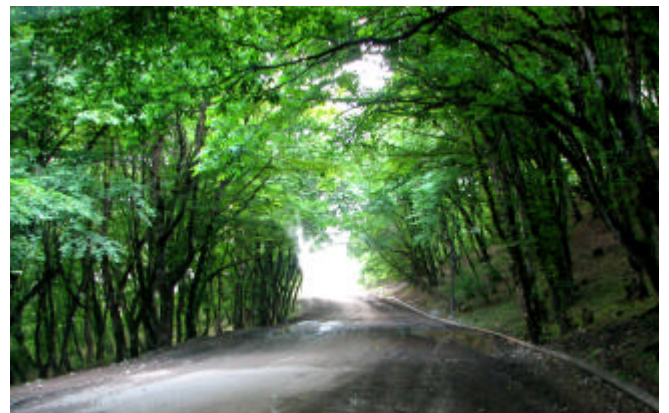
Azerbaijani American Women's Association is looking for ways to enrich its resources and to create a strong communication network among its members.

As a part of our RE-SOURCE ENRICHMENT project, we would like to invite you to become a member of our Expert Board. Please tell us about yourself by filling out our [Expert Board Application](#) you will find on our web site (www.aawausa.org) and sending it back to us either by email (info@aawausa.org) or

regular mail and we will feature you on our web site for interested parties to contact you.

This is done voluntarily and AAWA will only act as a liaison between you the expert and a second party. Our Expert Board may also voluntarily contribute to our development by sharing their expertise and knowledge to help us carry out projects and organize events.

If you have any questions, please contact Farida Buyuran at 562-899-1106 or write to info@aawausa.org.



PICTURE OF THE ISSUE:

ROAD TO ISMAYILLI,
AZERBAIJAN