

Exceeded Expectations

Between Occident and Orient: Personal impressions of THE SPIRIT as FIPRESCI jury member of the 10th anniversary Golden Apricot - Yerevan International Film Festival

Von Marc Hairapetian



THE SPIRIT in Armenia - First Day! Meeting director Atom Egoyan, actress Arsinee Khanjian and festival director Harutuyun Khachatryan at Film Festival Golden Apricot (Royal Tulip Grand Hotel Yerevan, July 7th, 2013, photo by SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)

Yerevan/Armenia, July 7th - 14th, 2013: Nothing is sadder than having great expectations about something that then are bitterly disappointed. On the other hand nothing is more magical than your expectations being exceeded like with my invitation as FIPRESCI jury member of this year 10th anniversary of Golden Apricot - Yerevan International Film Festival. For me it was not "just" a honorable cineaste's job, it was also the discovery of my father's home country, which, like me, he had never been visiting. Maybe you will ask: How is this possible? Armenia in his original size was so big, just like the Federal Republic of Germany is now. After the Turkish genocide on the Armenian people in 1915 - 1918 Armenians were going to the Diaspora to live in other countries all over the world. My father Ardavas (1940 - 2006) was born in Täbriz/Iran. Later he lived in Teheran. In the swinging sixties he came to Germany as a student. He married my mother Mago. As one of the founders of the Armenian Society in Frankfurt am Main he was a close friend of the world famous composer Aram Chatschaturjan. Suffice to say that he taught me a lot about Armenian history and culture - and also to love cinema! It was always our dream to visit the independent Armenian Republic - which has been existing since 1991 - and now this dream has come true for me.

From the first moment I was entering Yerevan I felt to be "at home". Everybody was friendly and open - the legendary Armenian hospitality made everything easy for me. As my jury colleague György Kárpáti wrote in his introduction about Golden Apricot - "Yerevan International Film Festival was brighter than ever". I can say honestly and not just with "half Armenian eyes" that this 10th anniversary had a high level standard - so that we can compare it with A class International

Film Festivals like Cannes, Venice or Berlin, the city where I have lived since September 1989. Most of the invited directors, actors, producers, jury members and other guests were staying in the five star Royal Tulip Grand Hotel close to the Main Festival Cinema Moscow. We all lived there like Kings. It was the center and the heart of the Festival with many events, press cocktails, conferences and interviews, like those I could do with Armenian-French actor and director Serge Avedikian (who brought his wonderful new film about genius director "Paradzanow" to Golden Apricot), Armenian-Canadian director and Festival Honorary Chairman Atom Egoyan ("The Sweet Hereafter", "Ararat") or Hungarian director and President of the Main Jury István Szabó ("Mephisto", "Colonel Redl").

The quality of the film programme and competition was also superb. There was only one problem in the first days: Sometimes the screenings in the wonderful and stylish Cinema Moscow were a little dark - especially of film classic "Mephisto" (1981). But very quickly, the Festival could find a solution for it. With my fellow FIPRESCI jury members Anna Erznkyan and György Kárpáti I could see many good films from different countries like Armenia, Russia, Austria or Turkey, but as we say in Germany "The best always comes in the end" - the Iranian Film "The Last Winter" directed by Salem Salavati overwhelmed us in story telling and the artistic use of digital video. So it was easy for us to make a decision on the award winner.

To talk about my personal impressions of this trip to Armenia and Golden Apricot - every day had new highlights for me: It was really like in a fairy tale to meet the most famous Armenian of all time, the singer, actor and honorary guest Charles Aznavour, for an exclusive interview in his own (!) Charles Aznavour Museum on a hill where you have an amazing view of the Armenian capital Yerevan! With his 89 years Charles is still clear in his mind and a very charming interview partner. I will also never forget the concert in the House Museum of Aram Chatschaturjan: I had tears of joy in my eyes when I listened to the melodies of the ballet music "Spartacus" or "Gayaneh" which were played by a piano, violin and cello trio. In the end the director and pianist Armine Grigoryan asked me to send a picture of Aram Khatchaturian and my father to hang it in the museum! It was wonderful to have excursions to Sardarapat where the Armenian army once stopped the Turkish attack, Lake Sevan where István Szabó and me both felt that God was around us and Etschmiadzin where I had a nice conversation with the Catholicos, the religious leader of the first Christian nation: Armenia (301 AD). It was one of the most touching moments in my life when the audience was applauding at the Award Ceremony in the Yerevan Opera House in memory of my father Ardavas. My personal speech and of course also the motivation to give the FIPRESCI award to "The Last Winter" were also shown on Armenian TV.

The Film Festival Gala Dinners are not to compare with any Gala Dinner in Germany - and I am invited often in Berlin: Every night we were entering another place of extraordinary beauty between Occident and Orient: Among the Dinners we - charismatic Golden Apricot Festival General Director Harutyun Khachatryan, Austrian filmmaker Ulrich Seidl, US director Godfrey Reggio, jury colleagues, the pretty girls of Yerevan and me - all dancing together in Armenian or Georgian Style to live music. The lust for life is virulent in Armenia even if this country also has its problems with their politics, just like everywhere, and there is a discrepancy between rich and poor people - but these poor people give all they have to accommodate the guests and this is maybe the biggest gift you can make to a stranger, that he feels "at home" in Armenia! Thanks a lot for the invitation, Golden Apricot! Yes kesi shat kesirem, Voske Tsiran! Yes kesi shat kesirem, Hayastan! (I love you, Golden Apricot! I love you, Armenia!)

(Marc Hairapetian, July 28th, 2013)

Marc Hairapetian

was born in 1968 in Frankfurt am Main. His Armenian father, Ardavaz Hairapetian, was the founder of the Armenian Society in Marc's birthplace. At the age of 16 Hairapetian founded and became the editor of Spirit - Ein Lächeln Im Sturm (Spirit - A Smile in the Storm) www.spirit-fanzine.de, the magazine for film, theatre, music, literature and audio drama. Hairapetian has often been a jury member for German film festivals and has worked for newspapers and magazines in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the USA. He has conducted exclusive interviews with world-known personalities and is the co-writer of the "Oskar Werner - Das Filmbuch" biography (Vienna 2002). Since 2011, Hairapetian has been a board member of Kinomuseum Berlin (Cinema

Museum Berlin) and his film screenings of 70mm and 35mm prints of film classics are well known in Germany. Since 1996, Hairapetian has worked as an actor for television and cinema. His new film, the erotic thriller "True Love Ways" (directed by Mathieu Seiler), will come to Berlin IFF in 2014. He is proud to have Armenian roots - and as William Saroyan says, his "heart is in the highlands" of Armenia!

Link to FIPRESCI website:

www.fipresci.org/festivals/archive/2013/yerevan/mhairapetian.htm

And here are "just" the moments of THE SPIRIT!

www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10201533490930084



THE SPIRIT in Armenia - Marc Hairapetian meeting director and actress Margaretha von Trotta in Church in capital Yerevan (July 7th, 2013, photo by SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)



Actress Chorik Grigoryan and THE SPIRIT aka Marc Hairapetian at Royal Tulip Grand Hotel Yerevan (July 7th, 2013, photo by SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)



THE SPIRIT meeting now 89 year old Charles Aznavour - Marc Hairapetian was doing interview with most famous Armenian singer and actor in the world! (Royal Tulip Grand Hotel Yerevan, July 8th, 2013, photo by Nune for SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)



THE SPIRIT in Armenia - Second Day. FIPRESCI jury member Marc Hairapetian meeting singer and pianist E.V.A. again (Royal Tulip Grand Hotel Yerevan, July 8th, 2013, photo by Nune for SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)



THE SPIRIT aka Marc Hairapetian at Monument "David of Sassoun" - greatest hero of Armenia (Yerevan, July 9th, 2013, photo by Chorik Grigoryan for SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)



FIPRESCI Jury member Marc Hairapetian with president of Main Jury of Golden Apricot István Szabó. The world famous Hungarian director ("Mephisto", Colonel Redl") knows THE SPIRIT since 1999 (Sevan Lake, July 11th, 2013, photo by SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)



Arpine Oganyan and Marc Hairapetian at Café Moscow before Award Ceremony of Golden Apricot International Film Festival Armenia (Yerevan, July 13th, 2013, photo by Armine for SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)



THE SPIRIT aka Marc Hairapetian with film producer Sabina Sagadeeva at last Gala Dinner of Golden Apricot International Film Festival AFTER Award Ceremony (Yerevan, July 13th, 2013, photo by SPIRIT - EIN LÄCHELN IM STURM www.spirit-fanzine.de)
