

AGBU
ARTS

ARMENIANS
IN FILM
FRESNO

FEATURING WORKS
BY ARMENIAN FILMMAKERS

2024
FILMMAKERS

ALL I NEED

Katia Spivakova

AREG AND MANUSHAK

Ruben Van Leer
featuring Tigran Hamasyan

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Ophelia Harutyunyan

ROMEO

Marina Arzumanova

THE EGG

Vahan Grigoryan

THE TICKET

Kevork Aslanyan

FEB.21.25 | 5:30 PM (PST)

FRESNO STATE UNIVERSITY
FRESNO, CA





ABOUT AGBU ARTS

Armenian culture is as deep as its ancient roots, as rich as its mastery of diverse art forms, and as inventive and ingenious as its people. For this reason, **AGBU Arts** has become a driving force for developing and showcasing Armenian artists while treating audiences to experiences that reveal the transcendent human spirit in an Armenian context.

Central to AGBU Arts' mission is introducing Armenian culture and traditions to audiences worldwide. **Armenians in Film** showcases the works of award-winning filmmakers worldwide at leading film presenting venues; and **AGBU Performing Artists in Concert at Carnegie Hall** gives young Armenian musicians the unique opportunity to perform on one of the world's most famous stages.

Together with global AGBU Chapters, AGBU Arts organizes performance and exhibition opportunities to support and increase exposure to Armenian creatives, collaborating with institutions such as the **Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)**, **Centre Pompidou**, the **MET Museum**, the **British Film Institute (BFI)**, and countless others.

For more information, and to support AGBU Arts, visit www.agbu.org/arts.



AGBU ARTS CREATIVE TEAM

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Hayk Arsenyan, Director, AGBU Arts

Naheed Elyasi, Director, Marketing

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Anna Naumenko, Manager, Special Events

Ashley Toner, Coordinator, AGBU Arts

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Stephen Colangelo, Coordinator, Social Media

Giovanni Bernal, Graphic Designer

AGBU

The **Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)** is the world's largest non-profit organization devoted to upholding the Armenian heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs. Each year, AGBU is committed to making a difference in the lives of 500,000 people across Armenia, Artsakh and the Armenian diaspora. Since 1906, AGBU has remained true to one overarching goal: to create a foundation for the prosperity of all Armenians.

To learn more, visit www.agbu.org.

PROGRAM

ARMENIANS
IN FILM
FRESNO



All I Need

by Katia Spivakova

A woman returns to her childhood home amid an evacuation. As she tries to save the last pieces of her past, she recalls her ancestor's story of survival during the Armenian Genocide a 100 years ago.

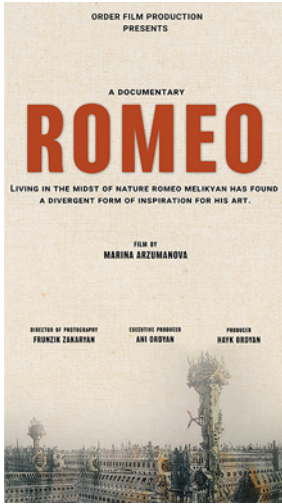


Katia Spivakova

Katia Spivakova, also known as “videothe poet,” is a filmmaker and writer of Armenian and Russian descent based in the United States. She has worked with renowned artists from Atlantic Records, taking on roles as a shooter, editor, producer, and director. Her experience spans over a decade, contributing to music videos, live performances, advertising campaigns and social media content.

Co-founder of the global media collective Happy Cat Media Group, she combines her technical skills with a deep love for cinema and poetry - which often weaves into her visual storytelling.

While she has directed short films in the past, her latest project, All I Need, is the first to gain traction on the festival circuit.



Romeo

by Marina Arzumanova

Where does visual artist Romeo Melikyan find his colors and shapes?

Romeo lives in Berd: a countryside city near the border. Being surrounded by the serene nature, he finds himself making art using the complete opposite sources of inspiration. Old, abandoned factories surround him, making rusty and misshaped metals Romeo's current sources of inspiration for his paintings and sculptures. Before, Romeo was explosive, trying to finish paintings quickly and not afraid to spend a month on one painting. But after the war, his approach changed. The artist is afraid of war: the only time he has no desire to create anything.

"I used to paint crowds, now buildings, after maybe nature. What will I paint after that? That's what I'm afraid of." – Romeo Melikyan



Marina Arzumanova

Marina Arzumanova was born in 2001 in the small Armenian town, Jermuk. Around the age of 8, she moved to Istanbul, but later moved back to Yerevan to begin her education at the Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinematography, where she graduated in July 2023. During her time as a student, she worked as an assistant, video editor, director, and VFX artist for several film projects. Marina is in the process of completing her first feature length documentary, *The Song and I*, with Order Film Production, which is set to release in 2025.



It Takes a Village by Ophelia Harutyunyan

Mariam lives in an Armenian village where there are no men. On her birthday, her hopes of a reunited family are shattered, but she must put aside her own crushed dreams and help her friend Anush as she embarks into motherhood.



Ophelia Harutyunyan

Ophelia Harutyunyan is an Armenian fiction and documentary filmmaker based out of Los Angeles and New York. She co-directed and produced the documentary *Totally Under Control* (NEON) about the US government's failed response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She produced *Crazy, Not Insane* (HBO) which premiered at the Venice Film Festival. She wrote and produced the fiction short film *Red Apples* which premiered at Toronto International Film Festival. Her films have played at other notable film festivals like Sundance, SXSW, TIFF, Tribeca, Clermont Ferrand, etc. Most recently, she wrote and directed the short fiction film *It Takes a Village...*, an Armenian-French-Belgian co-production, which premiered at Clermont Ferrand IFF and won the grand prix from France TV. She produced the documentary *WISE GUY* David Chase and *The Sopranos* which premiered at Tribeca Film Festival in 2024. She is currently directing a two-part feature documentary for HBO. She's a graduate of the Columbia University's Film MFA program and an alumna of the Berlinale Talents and La Biennale College Cinema programs.



Areg and Manushak

by Ruben Van Leer

featuring Tigran Hamasyan

In this musically emotional short documentary, Armenian composer and pianist Tigran Hamasyan visits Professor Dr. Arusyak Tamrazyan at the renowned manuscript archive in Yerevan, the Matenadaran. Immersed in the rich tapestry of Armenia's history, Tigran uncovers the deep connection between music and storytelling through ancient hymns and the spiritual image of the bird, depicted on papyrus by monks over the centuries. Inspired by the anthropomorphic bird's narrative and illustrations, Tigran composes new music. The film showcases his performance of the piece "Areg and Manushak," played on a piano transported by helicopter to a high mountain, allowing a live audience to experience the enchanting piece in a fairytale-like setting. This documentary serves as an introduction to the larger transmedia art project, "The Bird of a Thousand Voices," based on the folktale "Hazaran Blbul," in which a mythical bird brings harmony to the world.



Ruben Van Leer

Ruben Van Leer, an artist renowned for his award-winning films and interdisciplinary projects, is deeply influenced by his musical heritage and early engagement with contemporary film and theatre. His creations skillfully merge cinema, dance, music, digital art, avant-garde, and pop culture, aiming to connect diverse audiences worldwide.

By the age of 18, Van Leer had already earned two cultural awards: one for a film and print campaign for the Foundation Against Useless Violence, aired on MTV, and the NTR WebDance award, which led to the production of "Merkavah," a contemporary dance film for NPO3.

His education includes Advanced Filmmaking at the San Francisco Art Institute under Oscar nominee Jay Rosenblatt, an MFA in Social Design from the Sandberg Institute, and an MA in film from the Netherlands Film Academy.

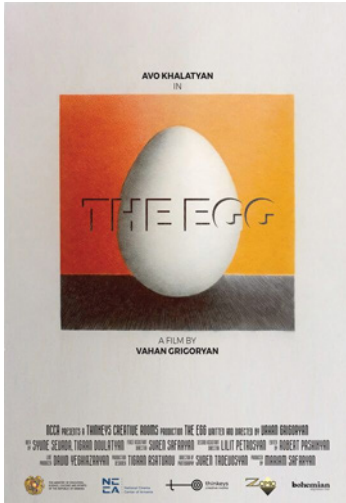


Tigran Hamasyan

Tigran Hamasyan is considered one of the most remarkable and distinctive jazz-meets-rock pianists/composers of his generation. A piano virtuoso with groove power, Hamasyan seamlessly fuses potent jazz improvisation and progressive rock with the rich folkloric music of his native Armenia. Born in Gyumri, Armenia, in 1987, his musical journey began in his childhood home, where he

was exposed to a diverse array of musical influences leading to him playing piano at the age of three, performing in festivals and competitions by the time he was eleven, and winning the Montreux Jazz Festival's piano competition in 2003. He released his debut album, *World Passion*, in 2004 at the age of seventeen. The following year, he won the prestigious Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition. Additional albums include *New Era*; *Red Hail*; *A Fable*, for which he was awarded a *Victoires de la Musique* (the equivalent of a Grammy Award in France); *Shadow Theater*; and *Luys i Luso* which featured the Yerevan State Chamber Choir focusing on Armenian sacred music stretching stylistically from the 5th century to the 20th century.

His Nonesuch debut, *Mockroot* (2015), won the Echo Jazz Award for International Piano Instrumentalist of the Year; subsequent records for the label include *An Ancient Observer* (2017) the companion EP, *For Gymuri* (2018), *Revisiting the Film* (2021) and most recently *StandArt* (2022). Hamasyan was awarded the *Deutscher Jazzpreis* international category in Piano/Keyboards in 2021. Hamasyan has released records on France's Plus Loins, Universal France, Nonesuch and ECM.



The Egg by Vahan Grigoryan

A failed actor now entertains kids and seeks his fate through endless castings and auditions. Continuous setbacks push him into motivational media and all of a sudden, he accomplishes a "feat".



Vahan Grigoryan

Vahan Grigoryan was born in Yerevan in 1982. In 1999, Vahan graduated from Yerevan State University (Department of International Relations). In 2016, he started working in cinema. *The Egg* is his second work. His first short film, *The Mud*, earned him the Best Director Award at the Yerevan International Short Film Festival in 2022.



The Ticket

by Kevork Aslanyan

A boy travels through the whole city using one ticket.



Kevork Aslanyan

Kevork was born in Sofia, Bulgaria to the family of an engineer and an architect. Best parents in the world! He was never good at school, and never would be. He started his career as a musician (rhythm guitarist) of a rock-punk-metal band, but soon realized that music was not his thing, or at least that's what the drummer of the band said...

Kevork then went to film school, fascinated by computers and what they can do, and ended up becoming one of those "not that bad feature film editors." Then again, he was also fascinated by lazy, bad directors, so he decided to become one himself. Ta-da: here he is!

Kevork got his BA in Film and TV editing at the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts in 2009 (Sofia, Bulgaria). In 2012, he graduated from the London Film Academy as a Writer & Director (London, UK). Kevork made his directorial debut with the short film, GETTING FAT IN A HEALTHY WAY (2015).