



Ilda Simonian

Vocal Artist · Armenian Music & Heritage

Long Biography

Մամուլ եւ լրատվամիջոցներ · Press & Media

Ilda Simonian is an Armenian-Dutch mezzo-soprano, vocal coach, educator and artistic leader based in Amsterdam. Her work is dedicated to the performance, preservation and transmission of Armenian musical heritage, with a special focus on the Armenian vocal tradition, liturgical chant, the music of Komitas/Gomidas and songs of memory, longing and cultural identity.

Born in Istanbul, Simonian's first encounter with Armenian music took place within the sound world of the Armenian Apostolic Church. This liturgical tradition became an essential foundation for her later artistic path. In Istanbul she sang with the Sayat Nova Choir, the TRT Polyphonic Youth Choir of Turkish Radio and Television, and the Ruhi Su Dostlar Choir. These early experiences gave her a broad choral and musical formation, while her Armenian musical identity remained deeply connected to church singing and the historical Armenian repertoire.

After completing her studies in economics, she was admitted to the vocal department of the Mimar Sinan State Conservatory in Istanbul, where she studied opera. During this period she continued to sing actively, developing both her classical technique and her sensitivity to different vocal traditions. In 1991 she moved to the Netherlands, where she continued her musical studies and built a career as a concert singer, vocal coach and cultural organiser.

Over more than three decades, Simonian has performed in concert halls, churches, theatres, festivals, museums and cultural institutions in the Netherlands and abroad. Her concert practice includes Armenian sacred chant, traditional songs, chamber music programmes, interdisciplinary projects and storytelling concerts. She has appeared in collaborations with musicians and organisations including Nederlands Blazers Ensemble, Theater RAST, Ensemble Ararat, Ensemble Tombaz and cultural partners in the Netherlands, Germany, Turkey and beyond.

Her first album, *İzler | Հետքեր | Traces*, was released in 2008 by Kalan Music in Istanbul. The album presents Armenian songs and reflects her connection to memory, language and cultural roots. In 2022 she produced *Heritage | Ժառանգություն*, an album with twelve ancient songs collected and notated by Komitas/Gomidas, arranged for voice, string quartet and duduk. The project brings together Armenian song tradition, chamber music, storytelling and the transmission of cultural memory.



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Alongside her work as a performer, Simonian has developed a long-standing educational practice. Since the late 1990s she has taught voice, interpretation and stage presentation, and in 1999 she founded Simonian Music Management / Zingze Vocal Studio in Amsterdam. She has given vocal coaching, workshops and masterclasses in the Netherlands and abroad, including Amsterdam, Istanbul, Diyarbakır and Armenia. Her teaching combines vocal technique, interpretation, performance awareness and cultural context.

Simonian also introduces Armenian music to wider audiences through lectures, concert introductions and educational programmes. During Holland Festival 2018, she gave an introduction on Armenian music prior to the concert Gurdjieff meets Hewan. Through such activities she brings historical background, cultural meaning and listening context to audiences who may be encountering Armenian music for the first time.

In 2023, Simonian founded Stichting GRUNG in Amsterdam and serves as its artistic leader. The foundation was established to broaden the visibility of Armenian music and culture in the Netherlands through interdisciplinary cultural productions, concerts, education and collaboration. Through GRUNG, Simonian continues her mission to give Armenian music a stronger place within the Dutch cultural landscape while creating connections between communities, generations and artistic disciplines.

With her warm, expressive and deeply personal voice, Ilda Simonian brings Armenian songs to life as living stories. Her work stands at the intersection of music, memory, heritage and human connection.