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## **The AGBU Performing Arts Department Introduces Armenian Music to New York City Students through Carnegie Hall's Musical Explorers Program**

This spring, the AGBU Performing Arts Department collaborated with Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute (WMI) to have Armenia represented for the first time as part of WMI's Musical Explorers program. The program is designed to connect students in grades K-2 to New York City's rich and diverse musical community as they build fundamental music skills through listening, singing and moving to songs from all over the world. For four days, hundreds of New York City students and teachers sang traditional Armenian songs together with the acapella folk trio Zulal, the oud player Ara Dinkjian, and the clarinetist Martin Haroutunian, who showed the students several traditional Armenian instruments.

Zulal takes Armenia's village folk melodies and weaves intricate arrangements that pay tribute to the rural roots of the music, while introducing a sophisticated lyricism and energy. The trio's singers—Teni Apelian, Yeraz Markarian, and Anaïs Tekerian—have been singing together since 2002 and have performed at the Getty Museum, Berklee College of Music, Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage and New York's Symphony Space, along with performances for Cirque du Soleil and the Silk Road Project. Ara Dinkjian is an Armenian American oud player who has appeared in 22 countries and continues to compose, perform, record and teach. Martin Haroutunian, an accomplished clarinetist, is the director of the Arev Ensemble in Boston, which uses folk and modern instruments to recreate Armenian music.

The Musical Explorers program introduces New York City students and teachers to songs and dances from around the world, which they eventually perform along with the artists during the interactive concerts. As part of the program, Zulal led workshops with New York City public school K-2 teachers and advised on the creation of a full curriculum, including an accompanying CD, featuring lessons and creative extensions for semester-long coursework. In the 2016-17 season, along with Armenian folk music, students also learned about bluegrass, Chinese traditional music, Sudanese celebration songs, calypso, and hip-hop, exploring a diverse range of musical genres found in their New York City neighborhoods.

“At one moment during the concert, the host asked Ara Dinkjian to play his oud together with the steel pan of the calypso musician and the beats of the hip-hop DJ, displaying how diversity can be unified in one piece of music. This concept aligns perfectly with the mission of AGBU PAD: to

present our unique culture to the diverse audiences of New York. Hearing hundreds of children from the five boroughs of New York sing Armenian folk songs is the most touching symbol of unity in this immensely multicultural city,” said Hayk Arsenyan, the director of the AGBU Performing Arts Department.

*For more information about AGBU PAD, please visit <http://www.agbuperformingarts.org/> (<http://www.agbuperformingarts.org/>).*

*For more information about the Weill Music Institute’s Musical Explorers: <https://www.carnegiehall.org/Education/Musical-Explorers/> (<https://www.carnegiehall.org/Education/Musical-Explorers/>).*

Established in 1906, AGBU ([www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org) (<https://www.agbu.org>)) is the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization. Headquartered in New York City, AGBU preserves and promotes the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs, annually touching the lives of some 500,000 Armenians around the world.

For more information about AGBU and its worldwide programs, please visit [www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org) (<https://www.agbu.org>)