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AGBU Performing Arts Department Welcomes Tigran Hamasyan and His Luys i Luso Project

Sold-out audience enjoys experimental multimedia installation and concert

On May 4, the AGBU Performing Arts Department welcomed jazz prodigy Tigran Hamasyan and his Luys i Luso project at the Bric House Ballroom in Brooklyn. The project, Hamasyan's rearrangement of 5th to 20th-century sacred Armenian music for piano and voices—in collaboration with the Yerevan State Choir—is a multimedia installation and concert that uses life-sized screens to project his 2,000-mile pilgrimage through historical Armenia, documented by filmmakers Alex Igidbashian and Emily Mkrtichian.

The audio-visual installation uses Berlin's Studio Ondè's projection technologies, sound design, and animations that transform historic spaces around the world into living, breathing digital recreations. During the performance, Hamasyan improvised a live soundtrack to the installation and then invited his award-winning Mockroot trio—Sam Minaie on bass and Nate Wood on drums—to join the concert.

"I was very glad to see that the audience was composed of Armenians and non-Armenians of all backgrounds and ages. Together we traveled to the places in Hamasyan's installation through music and images, learning about Armenian history along the way. Hamasyan's fusion of jazz, metal, electro, techno and alternative made traditional Armenian music modern and appealing to younger non-Armenian audiences. In a way, Hamasyan is a representative of a new kind of Armenian culture," said Hayk Arsenyan, director of the AGBU Performing Arts Department.

Hamasyan is the winner of numerous prestigious prizes in music, including first prize at the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and International Instrumentalist of the Year in Piano at Echo Jazz 2015 for his debut album Mockroot. The name Mockroot touches on a theme that permeates the music—one of the natural world always triumphing over human complexity. “It is inspired by the photograph on the album cover,” says Hamasyan. “It is a picture that my friend Karen Mirzoyan took of a tree—almost dead—emerging from a lake. It was taken in a part of the world where people had deliberately raised the water level to irrigate land. And yet this tree just carried on, defiantly. It’s the idea that nature is constantly mocking humanity. Whatever we impose upon it, nature will always win. Mockroot is a sort of longing and nostalgia for a human nature that’s more spiritual, more loving, more together with its roots. There is a sacrifice in it—sacrifice to try to elevate spiritually. Many of the tracks are inspired by poetry, in particular the flowering of Armenian and Russian verse in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.”

For more information on AGBU Performing Arts, please visit www.agbuperformingarts.org (<http://www.agbuperformingarts.org>).

Established in 1906, AGBU (www.agbu.org (<http://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>)