

**Presentation ‘The Entry of Shakespeare on Armenian Stage and Page’
by H.J. Seymour at CAIA Hayashen on 17 March 2019**



Hasmik J. Seymour is theatre historian, translator, journalist and the founder of the Armenian Shakespeare Association (ASA), which originated in 2016 - the year of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death in 1616. ASA has since organised international conferences and events in Armenia and Europe dedicated to Shakespeare’s literary, dramatic and cultural legacy. Hasmik has presented Armenian Shakespeare heritage in major international conferences in the UK, USA and Europe. Her articles have been published in Stanford Global Shakespeare Encyclopaedia, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Cahiers Elisabethains, Arden Shakespeare and others.

In 2018 Hasmik’s translations of four principal plays by Arthur Miller - one of the major twentieth century playwrights - were printed for the first time in Armenia. In collaboration with Armenian publishers, she continues to translate dramas from English and French into Armenian for stage productions and wider readership.



“Arpi Araratian” periodical, where the first Shakespeare translation into Western Armenian was published by **Aram K. Teteyan, Smyrna 1853**



The first translation of *Romeo and Juliet* into Western Armenian by **Aram K. Teteyan, Smyrna 1866**

On 17 March 2019 at CAIA Hayashen, Hasmik Seymour presented her paper entitled *The Entry of Shakespeare on the Armenian Stage and Page*, to be published in a significant international anthology later this year. The speaker specified that Armenians started translating Shakespeare almost two centuries ago, however, little is known about Shakespeare’s early translations into Armenian. Her talk was accompanied by archival images of Shakespearean texts in Grapar, Western and Eastern Armenian. Quotations from Shakespeare were recited by Armenian undergraduate students Vanouhi (King’s College London) and Shushanik (University

of Cambridge) in English and Armenian, thus engaging the new generation in Armenian cultural studies.



Gevork Chmshkian (1837-1915), the first translator, director and interpreter of Shakespeare in Eastern Armenian

Further on, Hasmik Seymour examined the first professional stage adaptations in Armenian since the 1860s. A-level student Tigran Khosrovian read two celebrated soliloquys from *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* - the first Shakespearean plays introduced by the Armenian Theatre Troupe. Further on, the speaker examined the impact of the first stage adaptation of *Hamlet* with its unprecedented critical reception by foreign specialists and eyewitness testimonies.



The first production of *Hamlet*, Tiflis 1880



Petros Adamian (1859-1891): the first Hamlet of the Armenian stage

Concluding her years-long investigation results, the speaker noted that Armenians were the originators of theatrical activities in the 19th century under harsh censorship and personal sacrifices across the Ottoman Empire, Persia, Caucasus; furthermore, they were the first to introduce Shakespeare among the nations of the Near East and Caucasus on stage and page. Hasmik stressed that more needs to be done to raise the awareness amongst international academia about the contributions of Armenian translators and theatre practitioners to the global Shakespeare studies. Hasmik Seymour's enlightening presentation was accompanied by some rare archival photographs from the 19th century, that were displayed to the general public for the first time in Europe.

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