

Alexander (Shoora) Michailian

The beautiful sound of music and the church choir fills the St. Hurmizd Cathedral in Sydney every Sunday as it has for quite a number of years now. I did not realise the great amount of energy and time that went into producing such work until I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Michailian and his wife Lily several years ago, when I learnt that he spent most of his weekdays training the Church Choir, teaching violin to church youth, and organising performances for church functions. What was more astounding is that he had been doing that for almost forty years starting in Iran, then in the USA and now in Australia, and always with the support and encouragement of his wife Lily.

Through his musical professionalism and the selfless devotion of his time to teach the fine art of music to Assyrian youth, Mr. Michailian has inspired several of these youth to pursue high level studies in music. He is one of the many Assyrians of substantial character that gladly and quietly give to their nation by any means they can, knowing the importance of their unity and devotion to the survival of their scattered and stateless nation.



One of Mr. Michailian's most significant achievements for the Assyrian nation is the book of Liturgy, Hymns, and Songs of the Assyrian Church of the East with musical notations, which he commenced preparing in 1990 at the request of His Holiness Mar Dinkha, Patriarch of the Church of the East, and published in 1997. This work is the first of its kind in church history, and it has been praised by the Patriarch and the church hierarchy. His Beatitude Dr. Mar Aprem Mookan Archbishop of India writes that the significance of this work is in preserving unanimity and maintaining a common tune for the church that is scattered throughout the world. Until now, these tunes were passed from generation to generation by ear.

Alexander (Shoora) Michailian was born in 1930 in the Ukraine, and grew up to become one of the greatest and best known Assyrian musicians. His passion for music was discovered at the age of 8 by his mother who placed him with the best violin teachers she could. The family migrated to Iran in 1938 following the death of his father. While in Iran he further developed his musical skills and career.

In Iran, he was the Specialist of Musical Affairs at the Iranian Ministry of Education for a number of years. In 1971 he received the Royal Award from the Shah of Iran for his special musical composition for the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire. He also performed as a musical conductor in royal occasions. In addition, he established the first Assyrian band in Iran "the Eagle Band", and the first Assyrian choir in Iran "The Nabouram Assyrian National Choir" at the Shoushan school in 1966. He won the first place prize for composition of children's music in an Asia-Europe musical contest held in Bolonia, Italy in 1978.

In 1980, immigrated to the United States of America where he established a choir group, and an orchestral group that performed under his direction in Turlock, Chicago, San Jose, Modesto, and San Francisco. He later settled in Sydney Australia where he is currently residing, and where he repeated the work he had previously done in the United States. His Grace Mar Meelis Zaia Bishop of Australia and New Zealand has acknowledged this work on several occasions.

Throughout his career as a musician, he strived for excellence. He created many folklore and classical music pieces. As impressive as his musical talent and sense of achievement are, what earns him my respect and admiration most of all is his consistent loyalty to the countries he has lived in, to his Assyrian nation, and to the leadership of his church.

A good source for further reading on Alexander (Shoora) Michailian is an article in the July 1999 issue of the TAAAS journal "Purely Academic".