

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD 2020

DOSSIER
FOR THE NOMINEE

CHILDREN'S WRITER
MRS. NOUNEH SARKISSIAN

YEREVAN, ARMENIA

BIOGRAPHY

NOUNEH SARKISSIAN

Married to Dr. Armen Sarkissian, the President of Armenia, has two sons and three grandchildren

Nouneh was born into an intellectual family in the Republic of Armenia, USSR. Her father was a writer and journalist. Her mother was a teacher of Armenian language and literature.

In Yerevan she went to a school where the English language was taught parallel to Armenian and Russian. At school she was chosen as a child actress when she was only seven years old, and was given leading roles in school performances. She was noticed by the Armenian state TV and was invited regularly to participate in children's programmes. The school was staging Bernard Shaw's and Shakespeare's plays in original language. Nouneh considered herself lucky to have the parts of Eliza Doolittle *Pygmalion*, Cordelia *King Lear* and Juliet *Romeo and Juliet*.



It was then when Nouneh started to write stories and rhymes, being a member of the school literary circle. This didn't prevent her to travel to the State Radio by bus every Sunday morning and, occasionally, during school holidays, to be recorded in children's plays and programmes. Alongside school life, she studied music at a specialised Music School.

The life in the communist regime was harsh and difficult with restricted freedom. Nouneh's parents were making enough money to buy food, clothes and books. Her mother's salary was spent on transport, food and clothing, her father's – on books. Most of objects of necessity were considered to be a luxury, including good books. One had to register, queue and wait for months for a good dictionary or a novel. Many books were forbidden, like *Master and Margarita* by Bulgakov, so the books were secretly circulating among teenagers. In spite of all restrictions and lack of goods, the children of Soviet society were getting excellent education, for free.

After graduating from the special English language school, Nouneh entered the department of Romano-Germanic languages at the Yerevan State University.

This was followed by her work at the Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts – Matenadaran- in Yerevan. The work there has given Nouneh even more knowledge and information about history and culture of medieval world and, especially, of Armenia. Matenadaran, one of the largest manuscript depositories in the world, is a unique institution. While working there, Nouneh had the opportunity to meet with many scholars and observe thousands of medieval manuscripts with gorgeous, skilfully done illustrations. This had improved her professional skills. She was paid very little, but so-called material life was not a priority.

Parallel to her work at Matenadaran, she started to write essays for the Armenian Radio on old parchment manuscripts, culture, as well as about the work of prominent artists and musicians. She has made up a rich and fundamental basis for herself, based on her work and her family library.

As a family of four, Nouneh and her husband Armen Sarkissian, their two sons Vartan and Hayk, settled down in London in 1991. They have been connected with Great Britain since 1984, due to the work of Nouneh's husband, then a theoretical physicist, working at Cambridge University and later, at Queen Mary and Westfield College, London.

Once Nouneh's husband became the first Ambassador of the independent Republic of Armenia in the UK in 1992, she entered the Department of History of Art at Goldsmiths' College, London University and graduated with an MA. Her dissertation was on the art of American-Armenian abstract expressionist Arshile Gorky.

Art became Nouneh's priority and later she did numerous courses at Sotheby's and Christie's Auction Houses in order to improve her knowledge, as well as at Westminster College, London – to improve her drawing and painting skills. She continued to write on Art and Artists for Armenian Diaspora's media. From 1998 to 2000 Nouneh was the Cultural Counsellor at the Armenian Embassy in London. She was organising exhibitions and cultural events, presenting Armenian classical literature and contemporary art.

Her role at the Embassy was providing a platform for many artists as well as contributing to some extraordinary and diverse exhibitions such as; *Fabergé* which she transferred from the Kremlin to Las Vegas, through to *Symbols and Mysteries; Art in Transition'* in Kensington, London.

From 2000 to 2005 Nouneh was managing the Manoukian Cultural Centre at St. Yeghiche's Armenian Church, in London.

For many years Nouneh dedicated her time and energy to international and Armenian charities, raising funds through concerts of classical music, inviting famous musicians, choirs and orchestras for good causes.

After a few years, Nouneh returned to her love for music and formed a partnership with Steinway putting on concerts for aspiring and talented musicians at home in London, including a piano recital by Kit Armstrong, 23, whom she has supported since the age of 15.

Parallel to this, she continued writing for children. She wrote in one of her recent interviews: 'Our world is complicated. It is becoming more and more difficult to preserve moral values in such a complex environment for very young minds.

It is extremely important priority for my generation to present to the young generation of our children and in my case – grandchildren, values like kindness, love, family, friendship through books and word of mouth. It is important to teach them not to be lazy and to have goals and to have dreams in their lives. That is why I spend a lot of time visiting schools for talks and workshops with children. Good moral and disciplinary values are shaped in human beings at the very early age, during childhood, that's why it is utmost important to pay more attention to the education of children at nurseries and schools.

The world of children is different. It is not easy to write for them. One has to look at things through their prism and keep them interested in books, having the huge flow of electronic and media information around them.

I find inspiration for my books in the world of children, who I love.'

Nouneh is the author of over 16 books for children in Armenian, English, Russian, Ukrainian. Most of these books were donated by the author to children of Yerevan and regional schools and libraries and to children of Armenian diaspora in Great Britain, Russia, the USA and elsewhere.

One of her books -*Three Dragons*- was among the final 300 winners (the final 15%) in 2006 *Write A Story For Children* competition of The Academy of Children's Writers in the UK.

Following her husband's advice, who has become the President of Armenia in April 2018, Nouneh has arranged the translation of some of her books into dialects of Armenian language -Western Armenian, as well as different local dialects of Armenia- and donated all the books to the regional schools, nurseries and communities.

(Armenian is a pluricentric language, having two modern standardized forms: Eastern Armenian spoken in Armenia, and Western Armenian spoken in the Diaspora, as well as numerous dialects of Armenia).

In 2010 her book *Shoes for Dragon Nessie* was published in Kharkov, Ukraine in Russian and Ukrainian languages.

In 2015 one of Nouneh's earlier books, *The Magic Buttons*, was published in the UK by Quartet Books.

In 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017 Nouneh's books have been presented at numerous International Book Fairs, including in the UK, Italy and Armenia.

Some of her fairy tales have been turned into puppet shows and are successfully presented at the Hovhannes Toumanian Puppet Theatre and The State Marionette Theatre in Yerevan.

In February 2018 Nouneh's paintings were displayed at an exhibition at the Everard Green gallery in London. "The result in each case is a distinct visual musicality; a story told by means of process and the act of free expression." wrote Jason Carey, Head of Impressionism and Modern Art, Christie's, London, about her paintings.

In 2008 Nouneh was awarded with the St. Gregory the Illuminator medal by His Holiness Garegin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

In July 2018 Nouneh was awarded with the highest-ranking honour of the Republic of Italy – *Cavaliere di Gran Croce* (Dame of Grand Cross).

In November 2018 Nouneh was honoured with the Global Inspiration Leadership Award on the *6th South America-Africa-Middle East-Asia Women Summit-SAMEAWS Dubai-UAE 2018*.

Nouneh's grandchildren especially her granddaughter Savannah who is six years old, have been a constant creative source and inspiration to her children's books. Savannah and Nouneh joined their skills in a book called *The Adventures of Bluey and Pinky* for age group 4-7, which will be published in 2019 with Savannah's illustrations.

<http://www.nounehsarkissian.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/nounehsarkissianbooks/>

A STATEMENT ON NOUNEH SARKISSIAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULTS' LITERATURE

Nouneh Sarkissian is the author of over 16 books for children in Armenian, English, Russian and Ukrainian. Most of these books were donated by the author to the children of Yerevan and regional schools as well as to libraries and children of Armenian diaspora in the UK, Russia, the US and elsewhere.

Mrs. Sarkissian came up with an idea to translate some of her books into Western Armenian, as well as into some local Armenian dialects of Gyumri, Artsakh and Gavar. She has donated the books to the regional schools, nurseries and communities. This is a rare phenomenon in the Armenian children's and young adults' literature, considering the diversity of Armenian dialects and the widespread nature of the Armenian nation

At the same time, such an initiative contributes to the cultural and linguistic diversity of Armenian children and young adults living in different parts of the world, as well as, stimulates the preservation of their identity endangered in the modern world*.

Her stories have turned into puppet shows and are successfully presented to the Armenian audience in a new and modern format accompanied with classical music.

Nouneh Sarkissian, by her large experience in world art and culture, folklore and traditions enriches the Armenian children's and young adults' literature with her broad worldview. Her books are well designed, have a high print quality and contribute to the improvement of book publishing standards in Armenia. She makes an update of traditional characters of Armenian fairy tales such as kings, good and evil noblemen, maidens of outstanding beauty, courageous princes, wizards, gnomes, animals and dragons by presenting them to children in a new style and profile.

In the modern world, where the cinema, the television, computer games and new technologies take control of and limit children's imagination, as well as provoke acute emotions and expose to some aggression by leading child's fragile world into temptation, Nouneh's simple, kind, and bright narratives give birth to genuine emotions and initiate their attachment to the nature and people.

Here is what Nouneh Sarkissian says about that: “Our world is complicated. It is becoming more and more difficult to preserve moral values in such a complex environment for very young minds. It is extremely important priority for my generation to present to the young generation of our children and in my case – grandchildren, values like kindness, love, family, friendship through books and word of mouth. It is important to teach them not to be lazy and to have goals and dreams in their lives. That is why I spend a lot of time visiting schools for talks and workshops with children. Good moral and disciplinary values are shaped in human beings at the very early age, during childhood, that is why it is of the utmost importance to pay more attention to the education of children at nurseries and schools.

The world of children is different. It is not easy to write for them. One has to look at things through their prism and keep them interested in books, having the huge flow of electronic and media information around them.

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** Armenian is a pluricentric language, having two modern standardized forms: Eastern Armenian spoken in Armenia, and Western Armenian spoken in the Diaspora, as well as numerous dialects.*

According to UNESCO WEBPAGE “The most important thing that can be done to keep a language from disappearing is to create favourable conditions for its speakers to speak the language and teach it to their children. This often requires national policies that recognize and protect minority languages, education systems that promote mother-tongue instruction, and creative collaboration between community members and linguists to develop a writing system and introduce formal instruction in the language.”

APPRECIATIVE ESSAYS, INTERVIEWS AND ARTICLES

Diocese of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom and Ireland

Volume 1, Issue 20
19 December 2015

Armenian Church News

Community Life

Nouneh Sarkissian's "The Magic Button" Book Launch



Children's stories author Nouneh Sarkissian's first English story book, *The Magic Buttons* (Quartet Books), was launched at Linley London on 10th December. Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, the Primate, was among the invited guests, who were welcomed by David Linley.

Nouneh is the author of many enchanting and captivating children's story books, including *Vishap Nesin*, *Herosner*, *Basiliscos*, *Erek Vishap*, *Sadap* and others, some of which have been published in Armenian, Russian and Ukrainian.

Speaking about her new beautifully illustrated book, Nouneh noted that this children's tale is "about resourcefulness, courage and friendliness." Indeed, Nouneh's delightful previous tales nurture values and pose moral challenges that children, as well as adults face. No doubt, like her other books, *The Magic Buttons* will charm both children and adults alike. The story is about the International Conference of Wizards and Witches which has been sabotaged. Izzi Berton has stolen all the magic from those attending the conference, causing havoc everywhere. Will Pearl save the magic and cure the people from the terrible Blue Fever? Read to find out!
[\(http://quartetbooks.co.uk/shop/magic-buttons/\)](http://quartetbooks.co.uk/shop/magic-buttons/)



Nouneh Sarkissian's books in Armenian and Russian are on sale on www.foyles.co.uk and at Foyles bookshop at 113-119 Charing Cross Road.

'The Magic Buttons' is on Amazon or at Waterstones and it's possible to order it at any other major bookshop in the UK. For her other books see <http://www.nounehsarkissian.com/>

Nouneh Sarkissian has written stories for children since her early university years and her books have proved popular among children aged three to thirteen. For her other books see <http://www.nounehsarkissian.com/>



APPRECIATIVE ESSAYS, INTERVIEWS AND ARTICLES

TALES OF ENCHANTMENT BY KATE HAWTHORNE

Photograph by Jason Bell



Nouneh with Kolo, the family dog

Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster Today, 28 March 2016

www.KCWToday.co.uk

Nouneh Sarkissian is Armenian by birth. Her mother was a teacher and her father a journalist. Nouneh “who was brought up in a book”, has written 13 books for children, is a mother and grandmother, a supporter and author of works of arts and culture, and an artist herself. Her upbringing in a strict communist regime did little to inhibit her love of words. Visits to concerts were gifted to schools by the state so children were able to access opera, music and the theatre throughout their early education.

They were brought up to appreciate Culture and to study and comprehend the importance of the written word in society. Nouneh’s love of language and her relationship with words, music and books fostered an early interest in performance and at the age of seven years old she studied music alongside school life.

At eight she wrote to a local radio station requesting an audience with the producers in order to obtain a working role there. This bold approach, seeking to contribute to and be a part of a medium she loved, has stayed with her ever since.



Crane Drawing by Nouneh Sarkissian
Pen and ink on handmade paper

At 16, she appeared in; Pygmalion, Cinderella, Shakespeare's Hamlet, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet and plays by Shaw and other English writers. She became a presenter for Armenian Radio for children programmes, and for television where she presented Inchook which means WHY.

Nouneh explains; "It was a programme about a little person, a puppet, who asks "why" all the time. It was really intriguing and very informative for young ones. A little Google if you like, songs, musicals, puzzles and much more". It was a very creative medium in spite of the times when censorship was part of everyday life and strict punishment was meted out for wrong doings.

In 1971 Nouneh entered the Faculty of Philology to study foreign language and literature for 5 years. Following this, she worked at the Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts. Armenia places high value on translations. Many of early Greek works, that were destroyed have survived in Armenian translations. These works, with their beautiful illustrations, created by illuminators, have recently been shown in the Bodleian Library.

Nouneh Sarkissian married her university sweetheart, Armen, in 1978 and moved to England in 1991. Their first son Vartan was born in 1980 and the second, Hayk, in 1984. Savannah, Nouneh's granddaughter, is a constant creative source and inspiration to her childrens' books.

Nouneh returned to her love of music and formed a partnership with Steinway putting on concerts for aspiring and talented musicians, including a piano recital by Kit Armstrong, 23, who she has supported since the age of 15. Steinway created a limited edition of 150 pianos for its 150th anniversary. Nouneh, an amateur pianist plays regularly on one of these rosewood instruments for pleasure and for friends and family.

She went on to study for a Masters in 20th Century Modern Art, her thesis being Arshile Gorky (founder of abstract expressionism in America), and, with her husband, Armen Sarkissian, the current Armenian Ambassador, (former Armenian Prime minister 1996-1997), they supported an exhibition of Gorky's work at the Tate Modern.

Nouneh was the Cultural Counsellor for the Armenian Embassy and then Chargé d'Affaires. Her role with the Embassy has seen her provide a platform for many artists as well as contributing to some extraordinary and diverse exhibitions such as; Fabergé which she transferred from the Kremlin to Las Vegas, through to Symbols and Mysteries; Art in Transition in Kensington.

In between the worlds of Art, Culture and writing Nouneh draws and paints. Her work varies from highly vibrant, colourful paintings to stark and complex images in black ink on parchment paper. No set idea is fixed before these are drawn.

It is not surprising that after a background steeped in arts, culture, study and children that her own creativity found a platform in writing. Her earlier books have been printed in several languages and are hugely popular in Armenia and Russia. They have enchanting tales and wonderful drawings in all of them.



There is the *Dragon Nessie*, who loved her Red Shoes, but her feet were too big for them. So she cried so much that her tears flooded the village where she lived, and therefore she lived under water.

One day a cobbler made red shoes just for her and her tears subsided, as did the water and people came from far and wide to see her.

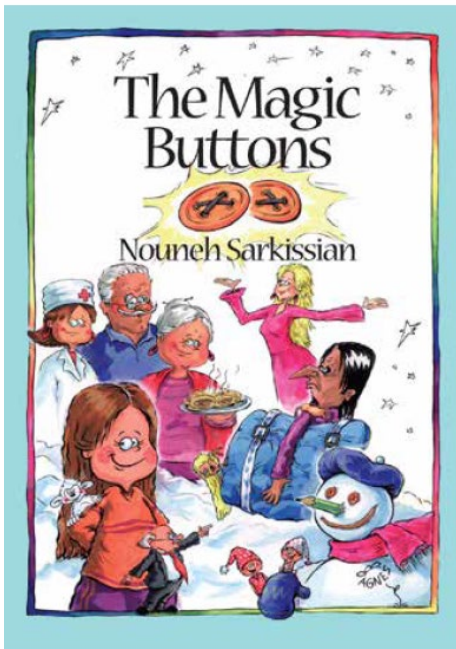
There is the story of the *Baby Bald Hedgehog*, who, yes, was born with no spikes.

All the villagers and animals rallied round to help him and with their friendship and the good food they found for him, he grew some spikes. And there are *The Three Dragons*, one born brown, not at all a Dragon's colour, who is teased endlessly, until he becomes the colourful one... and so on.

Lessons in life and on bullying and teasing are carefully thought through with a gentle educational process here.



Illustration by Ruben Grigorian



Published by Quartet Books

In 2015 one of Nouneh's earlier books, *The Magic Buttons*, was published in the UK by Quartet Books.

It is an enchanting and creative tale, packed full of the sorts of stories, mysteries and happenings that children love to hear about. The process of reading, and being read to, will find a natural home here and imaginations heightened as the text brings intrigue and vision to the reader.

What more can you want; a story about people turning blue because of a Blue Magical Powder. Who IS going to find the cure? Tiny little people as your friends. Witches good and bad whose powers are robbed from them at an International witches' and wizards' conference. A forest packed full of more magic. Izzi Berton a villain who holds a book of all human secrets, and yes, the Magic Buttons and all that they can do. The story is suitable for 4-13 year olds, whether of reading age or reading to age.

Nouneh's next book in line to be published is *Prince Basiliscus*. It is the story of two brothers and the Lizard World and how they save humanity from destruction. Now we could all do with learning a little bit about that...

A RAGS TO ROUBLES FAIRY TALE:

WRITER AND AMBASSADOR'S WIFE NOUNEH SARKISSIAN ON HER JOURNEY FROM SOVIET ARMENIA TO CHELSEA



© Debra Hurford Brown

Nouneh at her home in London's Chelsea

By Charlotte Pearson Methven for Daily Mail YOU Magazine, Sunday, 16 October 2016

Writer and ambassador's wife NOUNEH SARKISSIAN's life in privileged Chelsea is a far cry from her upbringing in Soviet Armenia. She tells Charlotte Pearson Methven about the unexpected benefit of communism: creativity

I am sitting in a sumptuous drawing room overlooking the Thames, enjoying watermelon slices and cherries from a silver salver. My hostess, Nouneh Sarkissian, 62, is the wife of Armenia's ambassador to Britain.

She also has one of the world's largest collections of David Linley furniture and numbers the designer himself – the Queen's nephew – among her closest friends. A journalist by background, she is now a successful children's author (Linley hosted the launch party for her latest book, *The Magic Buttons*, at his flagship store last December). But there is nothing showy about Nouneh.

Her exquisite furniture collection – bespoke Linley tables, chairs and bookshelves, alongside art deco treasures, antiques, rare pieces of Japanese art and old masters – is referred to with quiet appreciation.



Nouneh as a toddler with her mother and aged 16 in communist Armenia



Nouneh can't tell me exactly how many Linley pieces there are, but they seem to be everywhere, blending in seamlessly in this immaculate Chelsea town house. "We met David at the wedding of Armenian friends in Beirut in 1995 and have been close to him and [his wife] Serena ever since. We like his style. If I buy a set of Russian Imperial chairs, he will build a table to match. We don't consider our Linley collection to be furniture. We see each item as a work of art that will be passed down to future generations," she says.

Nouneh's husband Armen – an astrophysicist and former prime minister of Armenia – is now serving his third stint as Armenian ambassador in the UK. As well as being a prominent diplomat and politician, he is one of Armenia's most esteemed scientists and professors, and was, therefore, in a perfect position to broker oil and energy deals with the West when his country gained economic freedom from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Hence his wealth, and the seven-storey house at one of London's best addresses (he's also one of the creators of the cultishly popular tile-matching video game Tetris, which may have helped, too).



© Debra Hurford Brown

"I don't regret sacrificing my own ambitions for the wellbeing of my family," says Nouneh

But Nouneh is too erudite and polite to talk about money. She and Armen met at school in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia (then communist, and a part of the Soviet Union), when she was 14 and he was 15.

In contrast to their current gilded existence, they grew up in the austerity of the Soviet regime – a life Nouneh remembers as repressive, but also secure and nurturing of creative talent.

"My father was a journalist and my mother a teacher, so we were part of the intelligentsia. There were no classes in our society back then, just layers, and we were the second layer, after the nomenklatura – politicians and dignitaries who were allowed to travel and had access to foreign goods.

"We weren't rich but we were educated, with enough money to feed and clothe ourselves. I never felt deprived. It wasn't a bad childhood and I knew no different."

Nouneh does, however, recall some sinister moments. "There was always a sense that we were being watched," she recalls. "My mother would say to us, "Be careful. Don't tell jokes. The walls have ears."

"And you felt it from a young age. It is something I will never forget. The fear was everywhere – that's how the regime lasted so long.

"My father, as a journalist, had to be very careful to use the right words and phrases. When he became the editor-in-chief of the monthly newspaper *World of Books*, he had to make sure not to allow the "wrong" titles to be reviewed."

"You could lose your life for using the wrong word or picture. I remember a story of someone spilling tea on Stalin's photo in a newspaper and having to go for an interrogation."

'The fear was even worse during his regime; I was born a year after his death – nine years after the Second World War ended – and can still remember seeing people who had lost limbs fighting in the war. It was very gruesome."



Nouneh with her English Bulldog Kolo

But there was an upside to growing up in a communist regime: the huge emphasis that was placed on culture. “Our schools were amazing,” says Nouneh, “and we were given tickets to theatre, opera, classical music and the best ballet in the world – all for free!”

Nouneh was a bright talent in her own right; her early promise evident when she got herself a job at a local radio station aged ten, which meant travelling half an hour on her own by bus every Sunday morning.

“I was given children’s books to read on air. They would pay me some roubles, which I then gave to my mother, who needed them. I also wrote children’s stories and tried to get them published.”

It was at secondary school that she met – and fell in love with – her husband. “He is my first and my only,” she smiles. “Armen was the best student at our school and I was the best actress. We did Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw plays – in English, because learning English was a big part of a communist education back then – and I always landed the main parts.

“Because of this, I had boys running after me. But I was an independent soul and always said no. Armen became curious and thought, “Who is this girl rejecting all the boys?” The two wound up at a Young Communists conference together,” which was very boring”, so she invited the other students back to her house.

Armen was wowed by her father’s book collection and asked to borrow a volume of poetry, “which was against the rules, as my father hated loaning his books.” Fearing her father’s wrath if the tome was not returned, Nouneh tracked down Armen at school to retrieve it, “and this was how our friendship started,” she explains.

They went together to Yerevan State University – Armen to study physics and Nouneh languages. Upon graduating, Armen was offered a position at Cambridge University. “He was invited 13 times by different universities before the communists allowed it.”

They went together to Yerevan State University – Armen to study physics and Nouneh languages. Upon graduating, Armen was offered a position at Cambridge University. “He was invited 13 times by different universities before the communists allowed it.”

By the time he arrived in the UK in 1984, he and Nouneh were married with two sons, Vartan, now 36, and Hayk, 32. “Wives were not allowed to go abroad with Soviet scientists. We were kept behind as hostages. It was right after Hayk’s birth, so that was difficult. Moscow only allowed me to visit him for one month in April 1985.

“I was 30 and when I arrived in London [en route to Cambridge] it was the first time I had ever been abroad. Before that, I had only travelled around the Soviet Union to places like Siberia, which are beautiful but, of course, all any of us wanted was to see London and Paris.”

NOUNEH’S NOTES

Reading John le Carré’s *A Delicate Truth*. I love intellectual crime fiction.

Favourite children’s books Anything by Dr Seuss or Roald Dahl – and the Armenian national fairy tales

Watching Versailles was amazing – the script and acting were brilliant. Armen and I also watch Game of Thrones, but sometimes it gets too tense.

Go-to designer Jun Ashida, who has stores in Tokyo and Paris. Every time I go in, I buy a piece.

Holiday hotspot Other than my beautiful Armenia, I love Sardinia, which has the clearest water, and Japan, where the minimalist art and culture appeals to me.

Last meal on earth Something traditional and Armenian – red kidney bean soup with crushed walnuts, followed by lamb stew with slices of quince and tomatoes.

Most prized possession My English bulldog Kolo. He is a full member of the family. Bulldogs are easy as they sleep so much and are cuddly and friendly.

“I fell in love with London. Armen and I said, “If only we could live here for the rest of our lives...” At the time it didn’t seem possible, but Gorbachev had just come to power and declared his glasnost and perestroika – loosening censorship and allowing greater communication. We had friends from the West who told us about chewing gum, bell-bottom jeans and Jesus Christ Superstar – and, slowly, people began to rebel.”

Once the communist regime collapsed in 1991 and Armenia became independent, the country’s first elected president asked Armen – by then a prominent academic – to open an embassy in London, and by 1992 Nouneh and the boys had joined him there. After several years as ambassador, Armen was appointed prime minister of Armenia in 1996.

Nouneh spent two years commuting between London (where the boys were at top public schools) and Yerevan to visit her husband, with her mother coming to London to stay with their sons while she was away.

After stepping down as prime minister because of illness (from which he has now recovered), Armen became ambassador for a second time.

He then gave up the role for a few years to focus on other projects, before taking it up again in 2013, this time on an honorary basis.

Nouneh points proudly to a framed photo of Armen bowing to the Queen when she gave her blessing to his most recent appointment in 1998. “She said, “Armen, you are the champion of all ambassadors. This is the third time you have come back to us.” I admire Her Majesty so much. She is such a gracious soul and so intelligent.”

Nouneh and Armen are also friends with Prince Charles: they gave him a private tour when he visited Armenia in 2013. “The prince and my husband share a passion for preserving heritage,” explains Nouneh. “Armenia has some of the earliest Christian churches and our basilicas and sacred monuments have been beautifully preserved. Charles loved it.”

The Sarkissians have their own charity, Yerevan My Love, which restores “dilapidated and destroyed late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings” and repurposes them as music, community and sports centres where disadvantaged children can develop their talents.

The charity has held events at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, as well as in Yerevan. “The Prince has supported all of these and our charity has partnered his Prince’s Trust project at Dumfries House [a Palladian mansion in Ayrshire, which was restored for the community].”



© Debra Hurford Brown

"My book - the fairy tale - developed on its own," says Nouneh, "which is the magic of writing"

It tells the story of a little girl called Pearl, who is sent to live with her grandparents in Spic-and-Span Town after a plague takes hold in their village; she spins off on an adventure to save everyone, picking up friends with names such as Tumbletash along the way.

It is inspired by Nouneh's childhood and the close relationship she had with her grandmother growing up. "I sat down to write something that would reflect my own experience but when the words started to flow it became something completely different – a fantasy fairy tale. The story developed on its own, which is the magic of writing." Nouneh is now working on a sequel.

When she isn't writing or playing the dutiful ambassador's wife, Nouneh's energy goes on her English bulldog Kolo – "my first dog, and I am totally in love with him" – and her grandchildren, Savannah, four, and Armen, two, Vartan's children with his American wife. "Savannah has such an imagination.

Art and culture have retained a major influence on Nouneh. The holiday she and Armen most look forward to each year is their annual pilgrimage to the Mozart Festival in Salzburg.

And she found a channel for her own creativity through writing – for many years as a freelance arts journalist for Armenian publications and now through her children's books, which are beautifully illustrated, full of imagination "and each with a strong moral."

The Magic Buttons is her 14th book and the first to be published in English. (She has written ten in Armenian and three in Russian.)

She loves books and loves us to sit down and write stories together. Many of my best ideas come from her. We write about little domestic problems that can seem very large to children, such as worrying about needing the loo on the way to school and whether this will make you late.”

Her sons feel British, she says, though they are still proud of their roots. “I miss the less formal relationship between people in Armenia – the way you can just ring someone’s doorbell, have a coffee, empty your concerns and come home feeling better.

“We have a home in Yerevan and my sister [her only sibling, a graphic designer] is there, so we visit often. But I love London as much now as I did the day I arrived. There is no other place like it.”

Nouneh admits that she has forfeited some of her potential to support Armen’s career, but she clearly relishes family life and feels any sacrifices she’s made have been worth it. “I adore being a grandmother. My younger son Hayk is still single. I keep saying to him, “Hurry up! I want more grandchildren while I am still young.”

“When I push too much, he says, “You find me a woman then. I have just three conditions: she must be beautiful, clever and kind,” she smiles wryly.

“At least they live close to me. What I did to my mother by moving away!” Her idea of a perfect Sunday is the family coming together at their house in Surrey.

“I think I did sacrifice my own ambitions for the wellbeing of my family,” she says. “But I never regret it. I have two beautiful children who are mentally strong and ambitious [Vartan runs his own cyber-security company and Hayk works with his father].

“If my life was ever frustrating, I tried not to show it. I was like “happy face” – she assumes an exaggerated smile that brings to mind the grinning emoji – “because this was what everyone needed from me...Happy Mum. Sad face never works.

“It’s difficult to find the right balance in a relationship. Armen is strong and I’m strong. That could have been a clash, but I let him be our leader and he appreciates me for it. He always says he couldn’t have done any of it without me.”

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-3834282/A-rags-roubles-fairy-tale-Writer-ambassador-s-wife-Nouneh-Sarkissian-journey-Soviet-Armenia-Chelsea.html>

On June 15, 2017 The Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia organised the presentation of Nouneh's books.

Ms. Hranoush Hakobian, RA Minister of Diaspora, “Armenian children’s writer Nouneh Sarkissian has been known to Armenians and foreigners for a long time. She is able to portray a unique world of colors where dreams and reality are intertwined. In her stories even dragons can be kind and beautiful, and where good always wins over evil - this is what every child sincerely desires. Today, Nouneh’s fairy tales are available in Ukraine, Russia and England, conveying love and warmth to children and putting smiles on their faces. The Language Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of RA (NAS RA) helped Nouneh to translate her fairy tales into two of the local dialects of Armenia. It is worth to mention that we are now working on translating them into Western Armenian which will help Armenian children around the world to find more children’s literature in their own dialect.”

Mrs. Nayiri Mouradian, Head of Department of the RA Ministry of Diaspora, “I am glad to translate Nouneh Sarkissian’s fairy tales into Western Armenian, and I believe that if local Armenian language bearers wish to translate their works into Western Armenian, then Western Armenian language and culture will never be lost.”

Mr. Victor Katvalian, Director of Language Institute of the NAS RA, expressed his appreciation to Nouneh Sarkissian, “Those children who grow up with fairy tales enjoy the best of them. Nouneh Sarkissian’s fairy tales show children beauty, kindness and grandeur. And if there is a noble goal, then even the chance comes to help to find the way out.”

Mr. Vardan Devrikian, Director of the Literature Institute of the NAS RA, emphasized that one can see the harmony between form and content in Nouneh Sarkissian’s fairy tales. “We see the combination of British and Armenian cultures in her fairy tales, and this makes them more charming,”

Mr. Serge Srapionian, Deputy Minister of Diaspora, “It is quite difficult to satisfy children in the 21st century and be interesting for them. Nouneh Sarkissian’s fairy tales are interesting for children, especially Armenian children. The Armenian mythology can be much seen in Nouneh’s genes.”

BLACK AND WHITE & SOMETHING ELSE



The Meeting of Elephants

The creative process gives me happiness and satisfaction [...] I sign my name with the spiral, a symbol for eternity. Life is eternal, and yet we are in this world to do something; to give birth to composition.” – Nouneh Sarkissian

Born in Armenia, Nouneh Sarkissian is an artist, author and philanthropist based in Chelsea, London. She holds an MA in History of Art from Goldsmiths College, and is formally trained in studio painting and drawing. Nouneh has published 14 children's books in Armenian, Russian, Ukrainian and English, and is an impassioned patron of social and architectural projects in Armenia. Nouneh is a creator, collector and enthusiast of fine art, and she instils this passion in her friends and family every day.

Black and White & Something Else represents a series of eight compositions of ink on paper, each portraying a unique abstract narrative by emerging artist and celebrated author Nouneh Sarkissian. Bordering on the verges of conceptual, representational and psychological pictorial approaches, Nouneh's artistic process is wholly automatic and unhindered by intention or any conventional aesthetic. Rather, her method offers meaning in its honest and candid approach to expression and composition.



The Microscope in Boots



Polina's Secrets

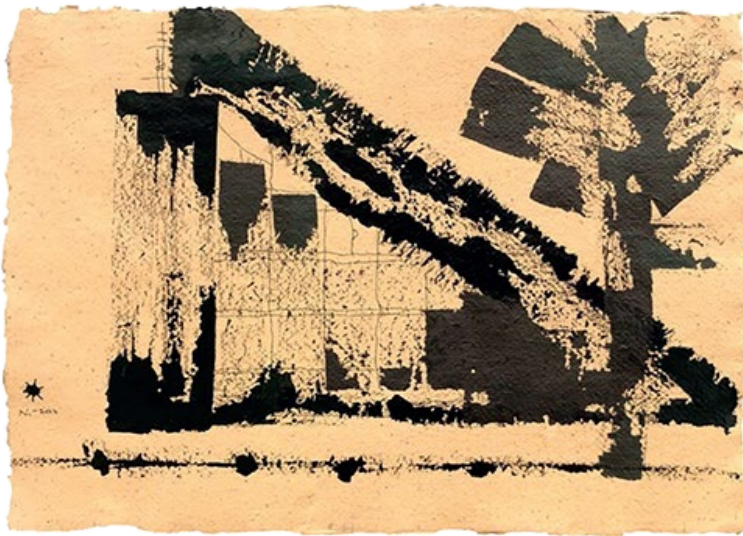


Jack the Bird in Sardinia

Executed on fibrous, handmade paper, lustrous India ink is applied to each sheet with reeds of varying widths, sometimes detailed with a range of sanguine and red pens, and then playfully accented with figurative components, birds being a common feature.



Tea with Kandinsky

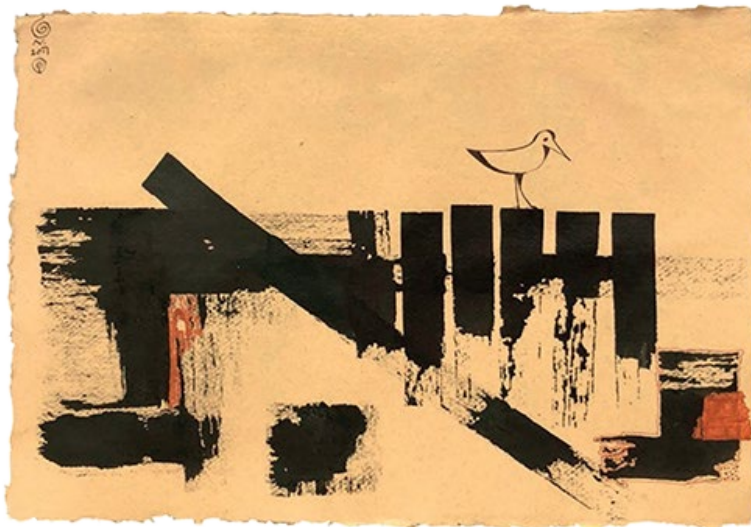


The Architect's Dream

The surrealist association with this dreamlike motif is further echoed in the title assigned to each work, inspired by an ephemeral thought, free association, mood or personal circumstance. The act of gesturally applied ink is reminiscent of calligraphy, an art also explored by the artist in her early experimentation with the medium. The result in each case is a distinct visual musicality; a story told by means of process and the act of free expression.

Jason Carey,

Head of Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's London
Printed in association with Christie's



Salvador, the Seagull

LIST OF AWARDS AND DISTINCTION

St. Gregory the Illuminator medal

by His Holiness Garegin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, 2008.

Cavaliere di Grand Croce (Dame of Grand Cross)

the highest-ranking honour of the Republic of Italy, July 2018.

Global Inspiration Leadership Award

on the 6th South America-Africa-Middle East-Asia Women Summit-SAMEAWS

Dubai-UAE 2018, November 2018.

COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

1. ՍԱԴԱՓ

Pearl, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2005, Yerevan, Armenia

2. ԵՐԵՔ ՎԻՇԱԴ

Three Dragons, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2009, Yerevan, Armenia

3. ՎԻՇԱԴ ՆԵՍԻՆ

Dragon Nessie, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2009, Yerevan, Armenia

4. ՀԵՐՈՍՆԵՐ

Heroes, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2009, Yerevan, Armenia

5. ՆՈԱՆ ՀԱՏԻԿՆԵՐ

The Seeds of Pomegranate, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

6. ԹԱԳԱԿՈՐՆ ՈՒ ՎԻՇԱԴԸ

The King and The Dragon, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

**7. ԹԵ ԻՆՉՊԵՍ ՓՂԻԿԸ
ՃԻՇՏ ՇՆՉԵԼ ՍՈՎՈՐԵՑ**

How The Little Elephant Learnt To Breathe Properly, in Armenian,
published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

8. ՔԱՉԱԼ ՈՉՆԻՆ

The Bald Hedgehog, in Armenian,
published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

9. ԿԱՓԻՂԿԱ

Ka-Pigh-Ka, in Armenian, published by
Alchemist Studios, 2011, Yerevan, Armenia

**10. ԴԱՎԻԹ, ՀԱՅԿ և
ԲԱՉԻԼԻՍԿՈՒՄ**

Davit, Hayk And Basiliscus, in Armenian,
published by Alchemist Studios, 2012, Yerevan, Armenia

11. ԹՉՈՒԿ ՄՉՈՒԿԸ

Jerome The Gnome (*Tzouk Mzouk*), in Armenian, published by
Alchemist Studios, 2016, Yerevan, Armenia

12. THE MAGIC BUTTONS, in English, published by Quartet Books, 2015, London, UK

13. THE ADVENTURES OF BLUEY AND PINKY, in English,
co-authored by Nouneh's granddaughter, Savannah Sarkissian. **To be published in 2019**

LIST OF TRANSLATED EDITIONS

1. ЗЕРНА ГРАНАТА

The Seeds of Pomegranate,

in Russian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

2. ЧЕРВОНІ ЧЕРЕВИЧКИ ДЛЯ НЕССИ

Red Shoes For Dragon Nessie (Dragon Nessie),

in Ukrainian published by Mikko, 2010, Kiev, Ukraine

3. ДРАКОН НЕССИ

Dragon Nessie

in Russian, published by Mikko, 2010, Kiev, Ukraine

4. ЦАРЬ И ДРАКОН

The King And The Dragon,

in Russian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

5. ГЕРОИ

Heroes, in Russian,

published by Alchemist Studios, 2015, Yerevan, Armenia

6. The books translated into different dialects of Armenian language and published by Alchemist Studios, 2015-2017, Yerevan, Armenia

The King and The Dragon

The Seeds of Pomegranate

Jerome the Gnome

Ka-Pigh-Ka

The Bald Hedgehog

The Dragon Nessie

Three Dragons

7. ԿԱԽԱՐԴԱԿԱՆ ԿՈՃԱԿՆԵՐ

The Magic Buttons, in Western

Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2018, Yerevan, Armenia

TEN OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TITLES

1. **Three Dragons**, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2009, Yerevan, Armenia
2. **Dragon Nessie**, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2009, Yerevan, Armenia
3. **Heroes** in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2009, Yerevan, Armenia
4. **The Seeds of Pomegranate**, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia
5. **The King and The Dragon**, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia
6. **How The Little Elephant Learnt To Breathe Properly**, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia
7. **The Bald Hedgehog**, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia
8. **Ka-Pigh-Ka**, in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2011, Yerevan, Armenia
9. **The Magic Buttons**, in English, published by Quartet Books, 2015, London, UK
10. **Jerome The Gnome** (*Tzouk Mzouk*), in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2016, Yerevan, Armenia

LIST OF THE FIVE BOOKS

1. THE SEEDS OF POMEGRANATE

in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

2. THE KING AND THE DRAGON

in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

3. THE BALD HEDGEHOG

in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

4. THE MAGIC BUTTONS

in English, published by Quartet Books, 2015, London, UK

5. JEROME THE GNOME

(*Tzouk Mzouk*) in Armenian, published by Alchemist Studios, 2016, Yerevan, Armenia

REVIEWS

ON NOUNEH SARKISSIAN'S FAIRY TALES

THE SEEDS OF POMEGRANATE

One may think what could be common between pomegranate seeds, the beautiful daughters of the King and the number of days in a year? In this fairy tale they all are closely interconnected.

King Aram had 365 wonderful daughters. The fame of their beauty and modesty had traveled far beyond his kingdom and reached an evil wizard called Sathan (or Drakmandak). Cunning and wicked, he got ahead of the 365 young princes from far away lands, which were hastening to ask for the hands of the King's daughters. Sathan sneaked into the palace at night and kidnapped the princesses.

As in most fairy tales at the finale of the story Evil is defeated by Good. The young men joined together, fought Sathan and broke the spell he had bound the girls with turning them into pomegranate seeds. In order to defeat Evil one should not be afraid to start a crucial fight against it. This is what the tale teaches.

The weddings of the princes and princesses lasted a whole year, 365 days. "It is believed that since then every pomegranate has had 365 seeds hidden under its peel," writes Nouneh Sarkissian. The author suggests that the young readers should check whether this is true or not, of course if they are patient enough to count the Seeds and can resist eating a handful.

Mr. Albert Nalbandian,
Editor-in-Chief of the Magazine,
"Literaturnaya Armenia"

THE SEEDS OF POMEGRANATE

Creative individuals can find different ways for expressing their own understanding of reality and figurative thinking. Nouneh Sarkissian converses with her reader through her natural and unadorned narratives. There are no scenes in her tales, which may vainly strain the mind and soul of the child reader, or annoy and upset them. Nor are there wicked and flattering personages. One cannot find intrigues and treachery either. These tales do not trouble the child reader's soul with hatred and wickedness.

The tale *The Seeds of Pomegranate* tells about joyful and bright Goodness that defeats Evil, which is ugly, cunning and wicked. According to the author, the days of the year are like the handsome princesses, each as kind and merry as the other, and similar to the cheerful young and brave princes.

It goes without a doubt that Goodness can be put to test, and braveness and valour will always come to its aid. Evil, however strong and sly it may be, is to be defeated, while darkness will disperse and the pomegranate will shine filling the world with bright and beautiful grace. Nouneh Sarkissian's tales wonderfully encourage goodness in people's minds, souls and lives.

The native tongue and the native dialect are major paths leading to the mind and soul of a child. This is the reason why the tale has also been published in a number of Armenian dialects, acquiring a singular charm and attractiveness for dialect speakers and those who know the value of a living language.

Mr. Victor Katvalian,
Doctor of Philology,
Director of Language Institute of the
National Academy of Sciences of
the Republic of Armenia

THE KING AND THE DRAGON

The fairy tale is thought to be one of the most difficult genres in children's literature. Only very few authors show willingness to write one. And yet fairy tales occupy an important place in Nouneh Sarkissian's work, the tale *The King and The Dragon* among them.

The plot of the tale is simple. It happened so that once a king saved a baby dragon lost in the wood and took him to the Palace. As time passed the baby dragon grew into a creature of enormous size. But its threatening appearance did not scare anyone. The Dragon was friendly, kind-hearted and was loyal to his saviour and the courtiers. But soon it felt like a black cloud was hanging over its head.

Envious of the Dragon, some of the noblemen began complaining to the King and insisted on its being expelled from the Palace. The King's grandchildren, who liked the Dragon very much, unwittingly prompted him how to get out from the situation. The detractors were disgraced, and the justice was served.

This playful and lively story teaches its young readers a good lesson, which they will never forget: goodwill and kindness will doubtless evoke similar noble feelings.

Mr. Albert Nalbandian,
Editor-in-Chief of the Magazine
"Literaturnaya Armeniya",

THE KING AND THE DRAGON

The fairy tales are stories, which feed a child's mind and soul with best qualities, with virtue and kindness. Love and compassion, beauty and light dominate in them. Nouneh Sarkissian's tales are among those stories. The allegoric images found in her texts rouse virtuous feelings and pleasant dreams in the reader. It is the absence of Evil that makes a fairy tale. *The King and the Dragon* is about that. The Dragon here is strong and powerful, but it believes its strength and power are for defending the King and his family who have sheltered him. The Dragon that has been brought up in love and harmony is a rightful member of the King's family; it is everybody's friend and is children's playfellow. This comes to prove there are no creatures in nature with inborn wickedness. It is the environment and the circumstances that shape our nature and deeds. Even the King's main servants, envious of the Dragon, first tried to have it expelled from the Palace, but later realized their mistake, were ashamed of themselves and tried to reconcile with the Dragon.

The author indirectly hints that when it comes to feeling and knowing goodness, children are the best in doing so. They are not afraid of the Dragon and through their play and innocence, they help it to find a way out of the difficult situation. The solution is both real and magical: the children's play involves the court and puts an end to disorder. We should see the world through the eyes of children as they are pure, kind and joyful. This seems to be the author's main message.

The beauty and simplicity of the narrative is one of the major values of a tale. It is only natural that the author, who prefers a cozy dialogue with her reader, took the initiative to collaborate with the Institute of Language of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, and have her text translated into a number of Armenian dialects.

Mr. Victor Katvalian,
Doctor of Philology,
Director of Language Institute of the
National Academy of Sciences of
the Republic of Armenia

THE BALD HEDGEHOG

Books, which feature hedgehogs as characters, are not rare in children's literature - witness Beatrix Potter's Mrs Tiggly-Winkle, the unforgettable laundress. Among other spiky heroes are Sergey Kozlov's moody Hedgehog in the Fog, John Patience' Fern Hollow hedgehogs and others. Nouneh Sarkissian's Bald Hedgehog is a delightful contribution to the series of anthropomorphic prickly protagonists.

In the warm and cozy burrow a spikeless hoglet is born to the respectable hedgehog family. The birth of a newborn is always an event. However, the birth of a bald baby hedgehog makes the young and affectionate mother cry bitterly, while the quick-tempered father imagines the disgrace such an offspring may bring upon the family. Luckily, there is the wise and helpful Granny who swaddles the baby in dry leaves and off she strolls to the doctor. The latter informs the elderly lady that hedgehogs are actually born without noticeable spikes. The little hedgehog is quite unaware of the disturbance its baldness has caused. And while he munches apples all night, the wakeful father watches short and pointed quills appear on the baby's skin making him the finest-looking hedgehog you have ever met.

Humanizing animals is always welcome in childhood texts and is favoured by young readers. The author has created truthful anthropomorphic characters: the little hedgehog is portrayed with the help of a colour simile: it *is as white and soft as a dough ball*. The choice of the badger as a hedgehog doctor is really amusing since the badger is known for its remarkable appetite for young hedgehogs when it is hungry enough.

The animal personages in the story are truly credible and behind their animal hide they are very much humanlike. While the child reader may relate itself with the little hedgehog, an adult reader is easily identifiable with other characters.

It is obvious that the story is told from the point of view of a person who knows about newly born babies and their fastidious parents at first hand. At the same time the author makes it possible to see things from a child's point of view.

The tale is marked for its well-defined storyline. The writer speaks in an even-tempered voice and the narrative unfolds with an unhurried pace. The rhetoric of the text is simple, the well-chosen wording conforms to the taste and the anticipations of the intended audience.

The happy finale of the story warms the heart and leaves the reader with a dreamy smile. *The Bald Hedgehog* is a remarkably readable book and can be highly recommended for young readers and their parents who can enjoy it just as much.

Mrs. Alvard Jivanyan,
Chair of English Philology
Yerevan State University,
Head of the Centre for Fairy Tale Studies
Hovhannes Toumanian Museum

THE BALD HEDGEHOG

A child is probably the most honest and incorruptible spectator. The child does not believe in false and unnatural things. Young spectators have their dreamland, their fairy tale, their own approach to the world.

It is not an easy task to satisfy them, and even more, it is difficult to be loved by inhabitants of that specific planet. However, Nouneh Sarkissian, through her fairy tales and her fairy tale plays, manages to harmoniously breathe with children and walk together with them. This means, she manages to stay young in the best sense of the term. Her stories attract not only child spectators but also grown-ups who still keep the fairy tale of their childhood in their hearts.

The State Marionette Theatre, the repertoire of which includes performances based on the tales of Hovhannes Toumanian and Ghazaros Aghayan (Armenian writers), Brothers Grimm, Perrault and Andersen, readily and with great enthusiasm performed Nouneh Sarkissian's *The Bald Hedgehog*, a fairy tale, which is modern in many aspects and traditional in the best sense of the term.

It is modern because the protagonists of this forest story live in our days, in the world of computers and the internet. It is traditional because it is about friendship, true thoughtfulness, kindness and devotion and because its mission is to encourage goodwill, honesty and unselfishness.

I think all the spectators of the Marionette Theatre realize this, love and evaluate the tale, and it is upon children's request that the play is included into the repertoire of the theatre.

Mrs. Anna Elbakian,
Artistic Director of
Yerevan State Marionette Theatre,
Member of Cinematographers' Union,
Member of Theatre Workers' Union
of the Republic of Armenia

JEROME THE GNOME

I read Nouneh Sarkissian's beautifully designed and illustrated fairy tale book, which she dedicated to her grandchildren. When reading the tale entitled *Jerome the Gnome*, the reader unwittingly thinks of parallels between the real and unreal worlds. Where is the boundary? What is the magic that attracts and fascinates us? And what excites and thrills our inner world showing a path to catharsis, which both readers and characters of the story take together with the little girl.

The greatest of mighty wizards, who has power over all possible and impossible things, and is above Evil and Good, suddenly starts crying... The tear of the powerful gnome called Jerome is filled with sincerity and penetrates the readers' heart, both that of children and adults.

One can be amazed to perceive the idea that being wicked is the easiest thing and to realize that the powerful wizard, who is capable of doing whatever he wants, is helpless in the face of his own magic. The simple reason is that the secret of kindness suggests any being should be able to give away part of themselves, at least a tiny bit. And it turns out that this offering is the most wonderful thing on earth and heaven alike. In the story, this message is materialized in the form of King's slippers, which the kind gnome eventually steals. This is a double symbol realizing the connection between the girl and magic, between the fairy tale and the king.

The selfish and cowardly nature of the courtiers is contrasted with the devotion and love of the weak and defenseless girl towards her ill grandparent King, towards her own flesh and blood. Her sincere tears transform the gnome who does not even seem to recognize kindness, when he encounters it. It is this selfless girl, who makes the essence of the narrative; and she is the very spirit of the author, and the author herself. This fairy tale shares common features with many international folk tales and its author has the rigor of their tellers.

It is not difficult to see the true power the fairy tale is rich with. It harmonizes with human relations and reveals the secret of the bond between man and nature. Doubtless, love is the name of that power and like a true fairy tale, it lives in its native home, which is the human heart. The best way to test a children's book is to read it to a child. Yesterday I read the wonderful story of Jerome the Gnome to Leo, my grandson. And Leo loved *Jerome the Gnome...*

Mr. Merouzhan Ter-Gulanian,
Writer,
Editor-in-Chief
of the literary Magazine "*Andin*"

JEROME THE GNOME

The young spectators accepted *The Bald Hedgehog* with a great enthusiasm and the success that this fairy tale had on stage, led us to the idea of performing another tale of the author entitled *Jerome The Gnome*. The staging works are in process now at the Yerevan State Marionette Theatre. To a certain extent, this tale is a mixed story about both human and animal worlds. It tells a story about how natural endowment can be used for both good and evil goals. As a fairy tale writer Nouneh Sarkissian, doubtless, punishes Evil but at the same time, she gives it a chance to amend its ways, transform itself, and put its potential for the sake of good and the fairness. Such is Nouneh Sarkissian's worldview as an author, who encourages forgiveness and tolerance.

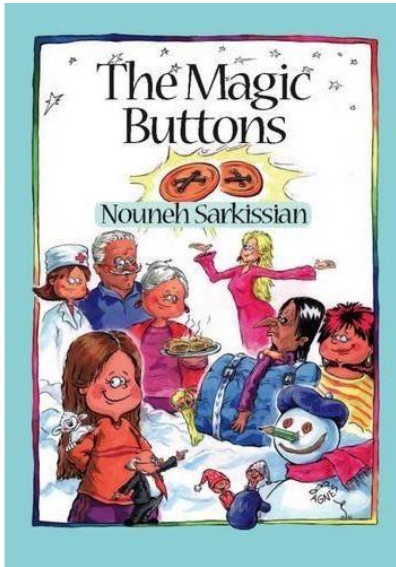
The author loves the animals of the forest, and by personifying them, she makes them human. She tries and, in our opinion, succeeds in putting forward the thesis of the inseparability of the nature and humankind. She creates a fairy tale, where Good will always defeat Evil, and the fairy tale logic prevails. It is truly important that Nouneh Sarkissian believes in fairy tales and she passes that ability to child spectators.

Mrs. Anna Elbakian,
Artistic Director of
Yerevan State Marionette Theatre,
Member of Cinematographers' Union,
Member of Theatre Workers' Union
of the Republic of Armenia

A NEW SPARKLE ON THE HORIZON

By Naim Attallah

December 11th, 2015



The International Conference of Wizards and Witches has been sabotaged!

Izzie Berton has stolen all the magic from those attending, causing havoc everywhere.

Can Pearl save the magic and cure the people from the terrible Blue Fever?

Nouneh's books, written in Armenian, proved popular in her country with young children. Now, for the first time, Quartet is proud to publish the first English version of one of her books, *The Magic Buttons*, in order to acquaint the British reading public with a new vibrant talent that deserves world-wide recognition.

The first of the series is a delightful tale of resourcefulness, courage and friendship which will charm both children and adults alike and introduce a writer of considerable imagination and verve.

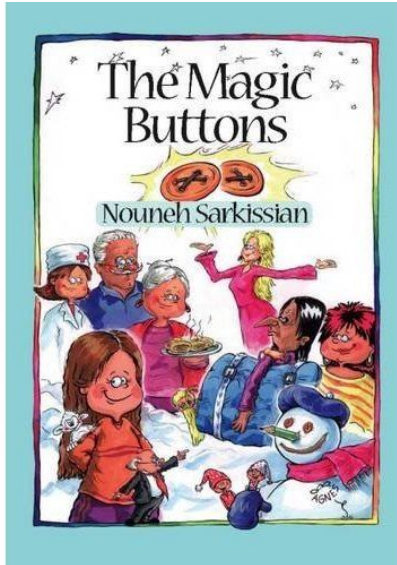
Nouneh's debut in the highly competitive English book market is a bold step and worthy of note. For her talent is without doubt easily recognisable, once the book is given the promotion it deserves, and public access is not withheld on the grounds of her anonymity as a newcomer.

Nouneh's addition to our long list of nurturing talent undertaken over the years speaks volumes of our determination to keep the flame of our founding principals alive and to encourage budding writers to take the plunge, despite the numerous odds that can impede their progress. But in the end, quality, innovation and the art of story-telling triumph given time and determination.

As a Nouneh's publisher, I have great faith in our ability to enlighten the reading public, whenever we come across an author whose combination of literary flair and natural flow of language renders a story into a magical tale.

Book Review By Assadour Guzelian, 12 January, 2016

<http://hetq.am/en/article/64949>



A reception to launch Nouneh Sarkissian's *The Magic Buttons* was organised at Linley London Centre on December 10, 2015 by Lord David Linley and Naim Attallah of Quartet Books.

Lord Linley welcomed the guests and congratulated Nouneh Sarkissian, highly praising her book. On behalf of Quartet Books, Mr. Naim Attallah greeted the guests, praised the author of *The Magic Buttons* and spoke about the literary merit and contribution the book will make to UK children's literature.

Sarkissian stated that stories of her previous books, as well as the one just published, teach children not only to love and respect moral values, but also to be resourceful and brave in defending them.

Sarkissian was born in Yerevan and graduated from the Romano-German faculty of the State University of Armenia. In 1991, together with their two sons Vartan and Haik, Nouneh and her husband Armen settled in London, UK, where she obtained a MA degree from Goldsmith College, London University.

Nouneh is not a newcomer to children's literature. Her stories were published in Soviet Armenian children's magazines during her early university years. Although *The Magic Buttons* is Nouneh's first English book, Armenian children have been enjoying her stories for many years.

The Magic Buttons is a beautiful tale written by an author who has great creative talent and an intimate knowledge and understanding of a child's world. She can communicate with them, nourish their minds and feed their imagination with noble ideas. The story of the book is about the International Conference of Wizards and Witches, which has been sabotaged by Izzi Berton, who has stolen all the magic from those attending, causing havoc everywhere. He has also stolen the magic buttons. The hero of the book is a little girl called Pearl. Can Pearl find and bring back the magic buttons and cure her grandfather and many others infected with Blue Fever by Izzi Berton?

If with her earlier books, N. Sarkissian succeeded in revitalising Armenian Children's literature, undoubtedly with *The Magic Buttons* she has made a triumphant entry to English literature as children's author.

The only remark I wish to make is related to the appearance of the book and not its literary merit. In my opinion the publishers could have chosen a more child-friendly font in printing the book and done at least some of the illustrations in colour.



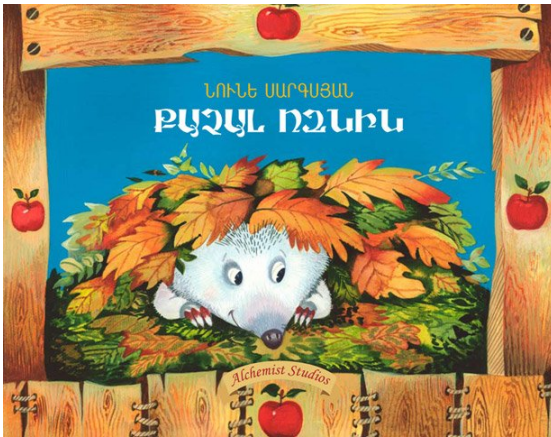
REPRODUCTION OF THE BOOKS' COVERS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Seeds of Pomegranate, 2010, Alchemist Studios



The Bald Hedgehog, 2010, Alchemist Studios

Illustrator: Mr. Ruben Grigorian



Jerome The Gnome, 2016, Alchemist Studios

Illustrator: Ms. Lala Sargsian



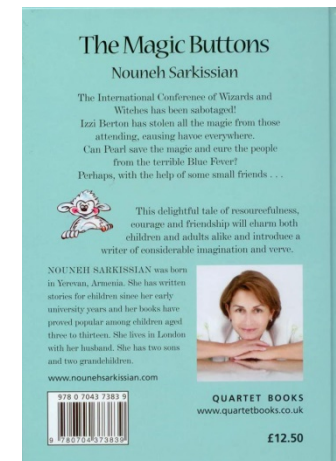
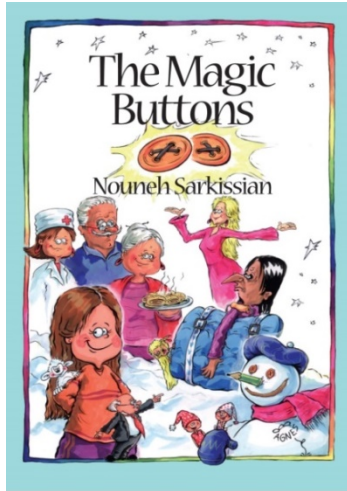
The King and The Dragon, 2010, Alchemist Studios

Illustrator: Ms. Lala Sargsian



The Magic Buttons, 2015, Quartet Books

Illustrator: Ms. Agnes Avagian



Attached files:

Candidate's photo with high-resolution

Electronic files of the five books

Translations of the five books

Book Reviews in the original language
