



CZŁOWIEK **S**PIEWAJACY  
THE MAN WHO **S**INGS FROM THE  
SERCEM  
HEART

agnieszka czyżewska jacquemet

POLSKIE RADIO LUBLIN

## **THE MAN WHO SINGS FROM THE HEART**

### **Summary**

In the Caucasus, singers, like poets, are not ordinary people. They have spiritual connection with the supernatural. Their singing has the power of affecting human fates, explaining the world, breaking bad spells. It may also bring misfortune to the singers themselves who cannot escape their artistic destiny.

Ashot Martyrosiyan who had received his gift from his forefathers was brought up in this tradition. He has followed his song since he was a child. In Armenia, it brought him fame, in Poland - it helped him through the worst times. And although the song rules his life with absolute power, now and then getting him in trouble, his worst memories are the times when he had to remain silent. As an immigrant in a foreign country he did not even dare to dream of releasing his own album. When he got his chance, he saw it as a gift from heaven ... but with some reservation, not quite believing his luck. However the power of old song may a source of reflection and change one's destiny in the present

### **Concept of the programme**

The feature was broadcast on Wednesday 25.07.2018, as part of the cycle "With Your Own Ears", after 8 PM.

"With Your Own Ears" is a cycle presenting 1-hour programmes, broadcast from Monday to Friday. These are radio features (lasting up to 35 min.), supplemented by live discussions with guests invited to the studio. The guests are usually experts in the issues addressed in the presented feature. Their role is to provide social, historical, or cultural background. An important element of the programme is the participation of the listeners who can call or email the studio. Their voices, opinions, and reflections are presented during the programme. So it happens that after a feature broadcast, there is a live discussion in the studio with the participation of listeners and guests. Presented in the cycle are premier features, reruns, and documentaries made in also other regional branches of Polish Radio.

Preparing for my Wednesday meetings with the listeners of "With My Own Ears" cycle, I have always tried to look for the themes with my own ears and to use the radio means of expression to the maximum. Hence, quite often I have presented stories focusing on music. I have made a feature about an orchestra conductor, an Iranian Tar virtuoso, families fascinated with traditional Polish folk music, or a busker. A story about music is for me, most importantly, a story about a person and what comes straight from his or her heart.

In September 2018, when introducing new autumn programme format, the management board of Polish Radio Lublin completely changed the character of the cycle and deprived us of the opportunity to have live contact with the listeners.

Sound editor: Piotr Król

Script translation: Sylwia Gołofit – Lenda

Photos: Iwona Burdzanowska

*Setting the microphone*

00'00"

**Ashot**

One.... Two...

**Reporter:**

A bit more to the right...

**Ashot**

Hey...one, two , three... How is it now?

**Reporter:**

The closer you are to the microphone, the closer you are to your listener...

**Ashot**

Gosh ...

**Reporter:**

One can get to know you better

**Ashot**

00'32"

*(laughing)* I am Ashot Martyrosiyan. For almost twenty years .... I have not sung for so long, I've just given up...

**Reporter:**

mhm

**Ashot**

Let's give it a try... I'll sing if I can...

*Ashot singing in Armenian*

**Ashot**

This is my song - both the lyrics and the music

*Ashot singing his song in Armenian:*

*Wild springs are gone, dark hair turned grey,  
All my life captured in the song ....*

**Ashot**

This is the song ..... This is the song I sang for the first time. Since 1988 and back there in Armenia I had not sung, and here in Poland I have not sung for a long time. And this means... I was not alive... Literally, not alive. I had to sell gemstones. That's it... This market place. Selling stones to make my living.

*Sound of pouring the gemstones, chains, and bracelets, Ashot humming  
Hubbub of the street and market place*

**Ashot**

Over here it is lapis-lazuli, and over there - rock crystal

**Reporter:**

02'32

So you made it all with your own hands, didn't you? These bracelets, necklaces ...

**Ashot**

Yes, I have bloodstone here... O! My customer! haven't seen her for ages. Hello!

**Client 1**

Will you be able to find a pearl like that for me?

**Ashot**

Can I keep it?

**Client 1**

Yes. When can I come? Will Tuesday be OK?

**Ashot**

OK...

**Reporter:**

Do you know Ashot is an artist?

**Client 2**

We don't know much... but we do know he's an artist. He makes this jewellery...

**Reporter:**

02'51"

And he sings beautifully, too...

**Client 1 and 2 (together)**

Is that so? Really?

**Reporter:**

He wants to release an album...

**Client 1**

Oh! He has never said a word ...

**Ashot**

We are recording a nice songs, madam. Fifteen or seventeen songs it will be...

**Client 2**

In Russian?

**Ashot**

In Armenian, madam.

**Client 2**

In Armenian... that's great.

*Machining stones, street lights, car traffic.*

*Ashot singing his song:*

03'11"

*Wild springs are gone, dark hair turned grey,  
But my heart is full of love  
Tell me, how am I to grow old when my heart is still singing the song*

*Entering the house*

**Reporter:**

Hello! So it seems winter's here ...

**Ashot**

Come in. I thought you wouldn't come

**Reporter:**

I told you I would come between 11 and 12 ...

**Ashot**

Good, take a seat here. I'll make some coffee... For myself and for you, 'cos I drink two or three coffees a day, or more

**Reporter:**

This is a tiny little place you have here..

**Ashot**

I don't need more. I have double door, but the snow gets in anyway. That's the way it is. It's rented. We hardly manage to earn some money and fix this and that.

*Lighting a cigarette*

**Ashot**

Where is this music in me from? From my family, I could say. From my family. My aunts used to sing, my mother, too, and my uncle used to sing. He had a very nice voice. And he danced, too. I still can remember them singing. Well.... without any rehearsals... without a conductor, without notes, or music school. There's a party, some wine, and there we go ... Singing! It's fun. Someone joins us. And then another one, and another, and another. They are singing one beautiful song in voices... this was our education ....

**Reporter:**

Family musical education for life.

**Ashot**

This was the most important education then... This is how music is made.

*Ashot singing in Armenian „արջիկ սիրունի” (Oh Beautiful Girl):*

*Oh, beautiful girl, beautiful girl  
Why there is no one in your heart...*

*Paper*

**Ashot**

Why there is no one in your heart...

I can remember my sister singing it many times. And there is chorus joining in, and it's so beautiful.

*Choir and a drum*

**Choir conductor – Borys Somerschaf**

I'm listening, I'm listening ... good, it's OK, But I would put the microphone closer, because of the basses .... we need more of them in the recording.

**Ashot**

Yes Boria... OK

**Sound editor**

But there is also this sound ... do you want it lower?

**Ashot**

The drum is only in the chorus part...

**Choir conductor – Borys Somerschaf**

Ok, we'll add echoes and it will get the balance...

*(drum in the background)*

**Choir conductor – Borys Somerschaf**

I am the conductor of a male vocal group called "Kairos". We have worked with Armenian, Georgian, Greek and Hebrew music for over ten years. I met Ashot some eight or seven years ago. A friend of mine told me, she had met an Armenian man in the market place, making jewellery and drums. And playing the drums, too. I thought to myself – "I would like to meet this man". And so Ashot came. He does look like a genuine Armenian - short, dark hair. He played the drum and said he could sing songs, too. Or rather "sang" because that how he pronounces the word. The whole choir was here. As he started singing, our jaws just dropped. It turned out that it was not the jewellery or the drums that make Ashot special, but his singing. His voice ... When he sings, the time stops and you just have to listen. You cannot escape the atmosphere he creates. This is why we say that Ashot sings with his heart ... The man who sings with his heart. This is how our beautiful adventure started.

**Sound editor**

It's on

*Ashot singing with the choir „Գարահիսար” (Garahisar):*

*On the slope of Garahisar mountain, a great warrior falls to the ground  
His chest pierced by the enemy's weapon*

*Rehearsal in studio*

**Choir conductor – Borys Somerschaf**

When Ashot takes a breath, no one else does. Not just before him, and not just after him. This is important because of the microphones which do not always like us.

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

This idea that Ashot should produce something of his own has always been around. And on one of Kairos's performances, Krzysztof Bielewicz, a choir member, said: "Let's record Ashot's album". And someone asked: "What will you sing Ashot?". Ashot answered - "I know many beautiful songs" I know this song, and that, and another very nice one" He knows millions of them ....

*Ashot and the choir singing the song "Գարահիսար" (Garahisar):*

*Wounded hero, stained with blood, lying on the mountainside  
Drop by drop his life is dripping out ...*

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

His personality and his singing fill the whole stage. He becomes the song, the voice ... the music.

*Ashot and the choir singing the song "Գարահիսար" (Garahisar)*

**Choir conductor – Borys Somerschaf**

Ashot is an answer to our search for genuineness of singing, for harmony, for sincerity .... The non-verbal message contained between the words, between the notes ...

*Ashot and the choir singing the song "Գարահիսար" (Garahisar)*

**Ashot**

Well done. What do these words mean? Let me explain - "*Black eagle come down from the rocks and hide the warrior in the shadow of your wings*". This is a patriotic song. This is why the author was sentenced to 101 years ... when Armenia was a part of the Ottoman Empire.

**Reporter:**

The author was sentenced to 101 years of imprisonment?

**Ashot**

He was. During communist time the song was forbidden, too. The censors didn't like it. But I was young and radical then, and I sang ... This is why I said that a song, melody, music... is freedom, it is a road to freedom.

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

I remember he once told me he had to destroy his own songs and lyrics before police search. Had they been found, everyone would have been in trouble. A reasonable

man would never value a lyric more than his loved ones. Ashot burned his poems. I know it was a great sacrifice for him. It was nothing more than a song... or maybe much more...

*Ashot and the choir singing the song „տւլ մութ ամպեր” (Black, Dark Clouds):*

*Black dark clouds hanging over the summit,  
Aragac mountain wrapped up in darkness  
The sun in my heart will never rise again ...*

**Reporter:**

And what is singing here, in you, at spring?

**Ashot**

Nature's singing, madam... all the time, so beautifully. I was sitting here this morning, drinking coffee

*A swallow*

**Reporter:**

Ooo! Have you heard that...

**Ashot**

Sure. Swallows are singing.... I need the silence very much. Every noise is bad.

**Reporter:**

One can't hear one's own thoughts, let alone songs.

**Ashot**

Right... Would you like a coffee?

**Reporter:**

As always, every time

*Ashot enters the house, laughing*

**Ashot**

Back there in Armenia I had a peaceful job. I was a turner. I worked in a state-owned company in the morning. And I made drums at home, as a private business. I had customers from abroad - from France, Russia, Georgia. I used to sing in an amateur choir in the local culture centre. Then I started working in the Centre of Aesthetics. For ten years I had sung with the choir and as a soloist. We sang folk songs mostly. I also used to teach children to sing, and to play the drum ... Unfortunately, the war broke out. I had to leave my country. Not to find a better life, like some do. I just could not stay there. My work and life were in danger... and everything. When I went to Armenia some time later, I wanted to visit my friends at their homes... But what homes? There were no homes. Cemetery, a flower for one friend, a flower for another ... I found my friends in the cemetery.... I don't want to talk about it. That's the end of it.



*Choir*

**Reporter:**

Maybe you can sing about it???

**Ashot**

Signing is..... it helps a lot.

*Ashot and the choir singing the song „utL ũnLə wufytŕ” (Black, Dark Clouds):*

*I was walking around, watching your noble slopes  
But my heart is dark  
Nobody knows the pain I feel, oh the mountain, oh Aragac,*

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

I'm just floating with it, without understanding the words. It is enchanting. I feel as if the horizon expanded .... as if something truly beautiful was growing in front of me.

*Ashot and the choir singing the song „utL ũnLə wufytŕ” (Black, Dark Clouds)*

**Choir conductor – Borys Somerschaf**

There is longing. There is pain, harshness of nature, of hills... and rocks they build the churches of...

*Ashot and the choir singing the song „utL ũnLə wufytŕ” (Black, Dark Clouds)*

**Ashot**

They don't understand the words, but they can feel and understand the music This is what matters to me. This is the most important thing. It turns out that music knows no borders or nationalities. This is what makes us rich.

*A rehearsal before recording an arrangement of a tango*

**Sound editor**

Good D minor

**Ashot**

We are starting with the chorus, right?... Full power now

*Ashot humming*

**Ashot**

Robuś, what are you playing there: pi, pam, pam pom...boom? (*rehearsal continues, fading to the background*)

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

There is Armenia in this album, and a bit of Poland, too. We have decided to add a pinch of Europeanism to the arrangement, to give it a sense of relevance and

truthfulness for Ashot. He has become ours a bit over the years, a bit European. Although tango is not European, its global.

**Ashot**

Beautiful! Ooo! You can see the difference.... And now the note of worry ... there is "boom".....And the other one a bit higher... Beautiful! That was top class! Easy, slowly now. OK.

*The band and Ashot performing „Եթե կըկարոնես ” (If You miss Me)*

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

„Եթե կըկարոնես ”- *If You miss Me*, one of the songs, when the guys started rehearsing it, I knew it would stay with me whole night. It's a good recommendation for Ashot, the author.

*The band and Ashot performing „Եթե կըկարոնես ” (If You miss Me)*

*When you start to miss me and your heart begins to cry  
I will come to you my beautiful darling*

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

„Եթե կըկարոնես ”- *If You miss Me* .... It's a very hard situation, because a few years ago his wife, daughter, and the youngest son went back to Armenia due to health problems. His two elder sons stayed in Lublin. They have their own families here. They have started living their lives here, luckily. But Ashot's other half is far away. For several years Ashot had had no contact with her. Only via the phone and skype. And the distance is a source of longing and pain. Only this year did he renew this relationship. We have helped him financially, so he could get a ticket and fly there. Ashot tries to support his family as much as he can. He sends them money... But it's not easy. It is surely not easy at all.

*The band and Ashot performing „Եթե կըկարոնես ” (If You miss Me):*

*My hear is wild, my darling  
Spring will not come to my heart until I see you*

*Lighting a cigarette*

**Ashot**

I'm smoking here, madam It isn't nice out there...

**Reporter:**

The autumn has come, it's pouring, we can't go out ... Isn't smoking bad for your voice?

**Ashot**

I guess not, not yet ... *(footsteps)* I'll put the kettle on

**Reporter:**

To make some coffee, right?

**Ashot**

Right

**Reporter:**

It's been two years already, Ashot, since we have started drinking coffee together

**Ashot**

Unfortunately, I have run out of the coffee you brought, Agnieszka...

**Reporter:**

I've just brought another one

**Ashot**

Oh!

*(opening the package)*

**Ashot**

I arrived in Poland. I was looking for a job. I tried everything, really .... ..... digging, building, plastering... I made stairs... You name it. I repaired pianos in Warsaw.... I worked as a carpenter. But it was not possible...

**Reporter:**

They did not pay you, did they?

**Ashot**

They didn't *(tapping his fingers on the table)* Very often they didn't. I had no choice but to start selling gemstones at the market place, to support the family. To live. And that's it. After I started singing in the choir, in Kairos, I started to feel human again. I started a new life. And if it all works out, I don't want to come back to the market place. If I have so many songs .... What do I need this market place for...

*A bag with the drum set on the wheels, a hall leading to the studio*

**Ashot**

The storm is coming ... The storm...

**Reporter:**

This sound,...you mean?...

**Ashot**

Yes... but why do you want to record so much noise???

*Testing the microphone, one one, two three, four*

**Ashot**

I'll set my voice myself ... *lalalam la*... Now you play. Try it...

*Ashot humming tam tatam, lala lalalam...*

**Musician**

No... We won't be learning now.

*Piano*

**Ashot**

And now the violin .... playing talalililam... No no no no .... this is wrong tilililam... Listen to me!.... It should go like that pipam ta tam...

**Musician (laughing ironically in the background)**

Bravo... well done

**Ashot**

Keep playing with emotion. You have several pieces of music in one here Concurrently ...

**Musician (interrupting in mid-sentence):**

Don't complicate the matter... we are working on the form now

**Ashot**

We will not complicate it... We are playing what we feel, straight from the heart... Robert.

**Musician**

No, no, no... there is no score

**Ashot**

What do you need a score for?

**Musician**

Because we have no time, I won't be learning everything by heart, or improvise ...*(discussion fading to the background)*

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

Between one drum beat and another Ashot has a fraction of a second in a song when he can add something coming straight from his heart. If he feels the need, he introduces ornaments. He makes a musical gesture, to feel even more beautiful.

*Ashot singing a fragment*

**Musician**

That's not right, either... you need to follow the phrase...

**Ashot**

What phrase...

**Musician**

The rhythm, in other words...

**Ashot**

Me???

**Musician**

Who else??? Me and Piotrek, we had to look for you there ....

**Ashot**

In which song?

**Musician**

In every song...

**Ashot**

I got it wrong in all songs??? ...*(the discussion fades to the background)*

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

There are no scores for majority of the songs. Ashot does not use professional terms. He doesn't say "play it higher or lower, play it faster or slower". Ashot says something completely different. – "Do your best"... Ashot wanted very much to make it as Armenian as possible. Musicians wanted to build as much as they can on the top of this Armenian spirit. To take a grip on it. It turned out that as their playing differed so much, there was nothing that could hold it together... I was late for one recording session, I entered the studio ... and there was silence...

**Ashot**

It is hopeless, hopeless...

*Packing up instruments, hubbub of the street*

**Client 3**

Hello! Will you be here every day now? You've been gone for quite some time... Will you be here every day? That's good.

**Ashot (interrupting in mid-sentence):**

Hello! Yes, madam. I'll try ....

**Reporter:**

Hello Ashot. You are in the market place, again???

**Ashot**

Where else could I be? For now this market place is the only place where they like these gemstones

**Reporter:**

One must earn one's living somehow...

*Machining the stones*

**Ashot**

One must. My kids are waiting for me, and my wife...

**Client 3**

I'll take these ... these earrings

**Ashot**

Two zlotys [EUR 0.40 ] a pair, madam

**Client 3**

Seven zloty [EUR 1.80 ] altogether, is it?

**Ashot**

Yes...

*Machining the stones*

**Ashot**

This whole album thing drags on and on.... I don't know if this album will be made at all ...(*machining the stones*).. We all have our own way of listening and our own imagination. When you listen to a song or music, you fall in love with it inasmuch as you can listen. The best poetry and music comes from listening (*a motorbike passing by*) Can you hear the engines...? (*laughing*) This is the best music I have now ... what I have, unfortunately....

*Hubbub of the street, Ashot and the choir singing the song “Հորովել” (Horovel):*

*My faithful and patient companion, my donkey  
Hard is our work on this rocky slope  
But the grapevine will put down its roots in the stone ....*

*Applause*

**Master of Ceremonies**

“Horovel” – Ashot Martyroyian. I have the great pleasure to tell you that a week ago we have released Ashot's solo album (*applause*) entitled “My Armenia”

*Hubbub of the foyer*

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

It was growing. It was a long process. One of the songs has been transformed completely. It started as nostalgic one, and now it is very dynamic. The key to success was not only to hear each other, but to listen to each other. This was creating the sense of unity, that we listen to each other, see each other, feel each other and float with Ashot. The album was recorded 100% live.

*Ashot signing the albums*

**Woman 1**

Can I have your signature?

**Ashot**

Yes, naturally. Here?

**Woman 1**

Yes

**Ashot**

Right here?.

**Man 1**

Yes, yes ...

**Woman 2**

Thank you..

**Ashot**

Nice to meet you...

**Woman 1**

Wonderful voice... and when such songs are sung straight from the heart, it is just wonderful. Thank you...

**Woman 3**

Please sign here, on this light background, so it is visible....

**Ashot**

Right here? ...

*(hubbub fades to the background)*

**Choir manager – Monika Tarajko**

This album is like a door that has led Ashot back to his artistic work. It's not only singing. Ashot also returned to drum making and to sculpture he is also a sculptor. At this point, whatever he does, it is art. And that's it.

*(Hubbub fading to the background, garden, entering the house)*

**Reporter:**

It's really hot weather, Ashot, isn't it? The summer is back again. Congratulations on your success.

**Ashot**

I don't know what to say. Obviously I am very happy. It took so long .... Three years. It doesn't matter if I'm proud of it or not. The most important thing is that people like it. End of story.

*(writing with a pen)*

## **Ashot**

I wrote on the album ... in Armenian, I wrote „հնձալից հետո երգ կմնա” – I only want this Song to remain when I’m gone, I could have written „երգ” - which means a “song” - with a small letter, but I used capital letter on purpose. SONG. Just a SONG. That will do. (*writing with a pen*) And the signature: “Martyrosiyan Ashot”

*Ashot singing his song:*

*My life is full of trouble and worries, and old age is coming my way  
But I will not give up, I will leave you signing the song*

*Wild springs are gone, dark hair turned grey,  
My life captured in the song*