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Homenetmen Glendale Ararat Chapter
Cultural Division

Get to Know...

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DERENIK DEMIRCHIAN

FEBRUARY 6, 1877 — DECEMBER 6, 1956

Derenik Demirchian Poet, novelist and translator as well as playwright, was born on February 6, 1877, in Akhalkalaki in what is now southern Georgia.

After completing his schooling in Tiflis, he became a member of the Armenian literary group Vernatun (Upper Room), so named because its members met in the 5th floor residence of poet Hovhannes Tumanian.

Demirchian published his first book of poetry in 1899.

He attended the University of Geneva from 1905 to 1909, and then after some years in Tiflis settled in Yerevan in 1925.

During the 1920s several of his plays were produced, most notably *Nazar the Brave*, a rags-to-riches comedy about a folkloric figure which is based on a collation of over 60 sources by the poet Tumanian. Described by Demirchian as a play for “childlike adults and adultlike children,” *Nazar the Brave* was first performed in 1924. It was subsequently given professional productions in Yerevan, Tiflis and Baku, made into an opera and later a film (1940). From the mid-1920s, in addition to writing plays, Demirchian began writing and publishing in other prose genres, including short stories, novels, and children’s stories. And his most notable work is “Vardanank” (parts 1 and 2, 1943-46, 2nd ed., 1951), a monumental patriotic novel, dedicated to the 5th century Armenian liberation war.

He was also known as a translator from the Russian; his translation of Gogol’s *Dead Souls* is especially esteemed. Demirchian continued to work and publish up until his death in 1956.

In 1980, the Derenik Demirchian State literary prize for prose was established in Soviet Armenia.

Derenik Demirchian House-Museum has operated since 1977 in Yerevan, in the house where the writer lived from 1929 – 1956.

