



...Culture, arts, & heritage of Azerbaijan & the Caucasus

## **Experiencing Jewish Azerbaijan: Cultural Traditions of the Jewish Azerbaijani Community**

### **For Immediate Release**

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Washington, D.C. December 13, 2011—On December 22, the ancient and modern Jewish communities of Azerbaijan will come to life in a celebratory holiday event featuring Azerbaijani music, food, and holiday traditions. Experiencing Jewish Azerbaijan will take place from 1:00-3:00pm at Leisure World in Silver Spring, Maryland. All may reserve tickets at <http://experiencingjewishazerbaijan.eventbrite.com/>.

In cooperation with the Coming of Age program at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, the Karabakh Foundation presents performances by two renowned musicians. The talented Jewish Azerbaijani violinist Vladimir Gamarnik introduces the sounds of his homeland, once considered the Conservatory of the Caucasus. Vladimir was a member of Azerbaijan's Academic Philharmonic Symphony for 20 years; today he tours throughout Europe and the United States. U.S. musician and lecturer Jeffrey Werbock will share his observations about the Jewish community of his adopted "second home" of Azerbaijan and will perform *mugham*, the national music of Azerbaijan. The community of Baku (capital of Azerbaijan) recently honored Jeffrey, who is considered a national treasure for his nearly 40 years of dedication to Azerbaijani music.

Executive Director of the Karabakh Foundation Diana Cohen Altman will help to launch the program with a brief orientation about Azerbaijan itself. A small country (the size of South Carolina), Azerbaijan borders Georgia, Turkey, Armenia, Iran, and Russia. Azerbaijan is a strategic ally of the United States. The country hosts the largest Jewish population, 7,500 people, in the former Soviet Union. In the Jewish world, Azerbaijan is famous for its ancient community of "mountain Jews" and also for its long tradition of tolerance and cooperation.



Traditional food of Azerbaijani Jews catered by the Azerbaijani establishment Kavkaz Kebab will be served, along with drinks. Program participants will have the opportunity to interact with presenters.

The Foundation's cosponsors for this program, the Coming of Age program, is an initiative of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington that offers activities, excursions, and special events to individuals age 60 and over. Coming of Age Director Frieda Enoch will open the program.

### **About the Karabakh Foundation**

The Karabakh Foundation is a U.S. 501(c)(3) cultural charity foundation based in Washington, D.C., that seeks to increase awareness and understanding in the United States of the cultural heritage and traditions of the country of Azerbaijan, the Caucasus area, and the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. While coalescing significant artistic and scholarly talent, the Foundation is nurturing a new generation of artists and scholars toward important accomplishments. The Foundation serves as a dynamic facilitator and clearinghouse raising the public profile of Azerbaijan, its Karabakh region, and the Caucasus region in general. Main activities include preserving and disseminating cultural content via archival collecting, public programs, publications, exhibitions, speaking forums, international collaborations, scholarly exchange, artistic sponsorship, and related venues.

Foundation support comes primarily from Khazar University, the first private university in Azerbaijan and one of the country's leading institutions of higher learning. Support also comes from the U.S.-based Allaverdy Foundation. Additional information about the Karabakh Foundation may be found at [www.KarabakhFoundation.org](http://www.KarabakhFoundation.org).

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