MARTIN SCORSESE'S TWO ARMENIAN ANGELS

Posted on January 28, 2025 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

By Jirair Tutunjian, Toronto, 28 January 2025

Talking about filmmakers who had influenced his work, celebrated director-producer Martin Scorsese more than once has said the guidance of Prof. Haig Manoogian (1916-1980) was the most precious gift he had ever received.

Scorsese was a callow teenager when he enrolled at the New York University to learn filmmaking. Talking about his first class, Scorsese said: "This gentleman got up and spoke with such passion and such energy about cinema. I became part of the cult. His name was Haig Manoogian."

The director of *Mean Streets, Taxi Driver, Goodfellas, Raging Bull* and a dozen other classics, went on to say about Manoogian: "He really inspired us. He pushed us… he beat us down and he built us back again. He set a fire in our hearts…" The multi-award winning Scorsese added that his experiences with Manoogian led him to become a film director.

New York-born Manoogian not only taught filmmaking in the classroom, he was also an author (*The Film-Maker's Art*) who advised Scorsese on how to improve his screenplays especially by adding new scenes. The Armenian teacher also acted as co-producer of Scorsese's first film (*Who's That Knocking at My Door*). When Scorsese made his much-acclaimed *Raging Bull*, he dedicated the film to Manoogian. But unfortunately, Manoogian had died a few months before the release of the movie.

Raging Bull had another Armenian link: it was co-written by Mardik Martin. Born in Iran (1934), Martin was a fellow student of Scorsese at the NYU. They soon became close friends and worked together on such Scorsese films as *Not Just You*. Mardik and Scorsese would often sit in Scorsese's Plymouth in the middle of winter writing screenplays. After graduation, Martin co-wrote Scorsese's *Mean Streets; New York, New York; and Raging Bull.* His name is included as screenwriter on the *Writers Guild of America's list of 101 Greatest Screenplay.*

In 2014 Mardik spread his wings overseas and co-wrote the screenplay of *The Cut*, a German movie. The movie's main male character was named Nazaret Manoogian. The first name was to recognize the Christianity of Armenians while the last name had two references: Haig Manoogian and Armenian philanthropist Alex Manoogian of Detroit.

Mardik was honored at several European film festivals and by Armenia's Parajanov-Vartanev

Institute "for the mastery of his pen on iconic American films." He died a few days before his 85th birthday.

Comments

Nora Bedrossian – 2025-01-31 23:03:01
Thank you Jirair Tutunjian for this lovely article.

Tavo – 2025-01-29 23:28:53
Thank you to Mr. Tutunjian who writes some of the best (if not THE best) obscure but true stories about Armenians. His book "Armenian Greats - Known and Unknown" is fascinating. See a review of it: https://armenianweekly.com/2025/01/28/book-review-armenian-greats-known-and-unknown-by-jirair-tutunjian/