

Charents Documentary

Charents: In Search of My Armenian Poet.

Written and Directed by Shareen Anderson.

Filmed in Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey this documentary is indeed a search and an honest perspective on the life and work of Armenian poet Eghishe Charents. With beautifully presented backdrop of the very places that inspired his poetry, we follow a journey into the life and, essentially, the mind of this intriguing figure. Having lived during pivotal events in our history, Charents' story reveals the Armenian people's modern history and culture, perhaps inadvertently. Presented by experts, poets, and artists the film invites also the experience of Armenians going about their everyday lives present with his spirit still today.

AAN: Why Charents? What about him or his work brought you to making this film?

Shareen Anderson: When I was a graduate student at St. Petersburg State University in Russia studying Russian literature, my thesis advisor suggested that I compare an Armenian symbolist poet with the Russian symbolists. At the time, I was also studying the Armenian language and some of the literature and thought it would be a great way to really get to know one of the Armenian poets. Somehow, she and I decided that Charents would be a fascinating study and that's when and how I became so familiar with his work. Of course, when you study someone's work, you also learn about that person's life, and I found Charents' life very interesting, and from those early days of reading his poetry and learning about his life, I knew that I wanted to make a film about him. Sixteen years later, I was finally able to realize that dream.



AAN: In Search of My Armenian Poet. Could you expand on the meaning of the title?

S.A.: Everyone in the film is in one way or another “searching” for the poet; one expert searches for the poet's final resting place, another searches for the poet's birthplace, another searches and finds the love of his life, under the wing of Charents' poetry. Even I, the filmmaker, am searching for Charents, or the idea of Charents, trying to understand why this person and his poems has had such a magnetic hold on me and others.”

AAN: As an Armenian filmmaker yourself, is there any aspect, technical or otherwise, in documentary filmmaking on Armenian subjects that you find either common or lacking?

S.A.: I can't really compare my approach to filmmaking to other Armenian filmmakers so it's difficult for me to answer if there is any aspect, technical or otherwise, that is lacking in documentary filmmaking on Armenian subjects. But I would certainly encourage more filmmakers to break the rules and think outside the box. For example, one young Armenian filmmaker, when she heard that my documentary was going to be over an hour long, said that documentaries aren't supposed to be over an hour long, which is actually so far from the truth. There are many feature length documentaries on the market these days, and many are well over 90 minutes. So, perhaps, if there was any additional advice I could give to other documentary filmmakers, it would be to watch as many documentaries as possible. It is a great way to learn about different techniques, styles, and approaches to subject matter and characters, and will broaden one's horizons.



AAN: The film is inspiring to watch. How do you think a deeper understanding of Charents and his poetry affect our community? Or, our contemporary artists today?

S.A.: I think Armenians today will gain a lot from reading Charents. I believe much of his work is relevant now and will be in the future. Also, his work provides a window into a difficult and challenging time in the history of Armenia – he witnessed and wrote about the Genocide, WWI, the Russian Revolution, which eventually came to Armenia, and he was a victim of Stalin’s terror. And as much as he looked toward the future for inspiration, he also looked to the past. For instance, the cycle of poems inspired by Sayat Nova are some of the most beautiful that I have ever read.

AAN: Any favorite Charents poems? Or quotes?

S.A.: Yes, I do have favorite poems by Charents – see the film to find out!

Article by: [Armenian Artists Network](#)

