



The
American
Turkish
Society
Since 1949

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FIRST ARIF MARDIN MUSIC FELLOW BEGINS HER STUDIES

New Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs Further The American Turkish Society's Mission

New York, NY– July 10, 2007 – The American Turkish Society is proud to have awarded the first *Arif Mardin Music Fellowship* to Ms. Sirma Munyar, a talented, young pianist and vocalist from Turkey. The fellowship, established by the Society in memory of Arif Mardin (1932-2006), a world-renowned producer/arranger and long-time Vice Chairman of organization, provides promising musicians of Turkish descent exposure to the field in the United States. Sirma Munyar is currently attending the Five-Week Summer Performance Program (July 7 - August 10) in jazz vocal at the Berklee College of Music.

The American Turkish Society's educational and cultural exchange programs are a critical component of its mission to promote the U.S.–Turkish partnership. In addition to ongoing panels, lectures, and conferences focused on business, economics, politics, current affairs, and arts & culture, the Society initiates and funds a number of fellowships, exchange programs, and cultural projects. "Our goal is to support projects that are well-aligned with our mission, leverage the resources of our partners, and have a multiplying impact on the relations and mutual understanding between our two countries," remarks Selen Ucak, Executive Director of The American Turkish Society, "we will continue to increase our philanthropic support to such projects in the coming year."

An example of such programs is the *Global Educators Program*, launched and supported by The American Turkish Society since 2003, in collaboration with the American Field Service (AFS). The program allows Turkish teachers to spend a year teaching at a U.S. school, so that they can study the educational system in the United States while sharing Turkish culture with American students. This year, the program has recruited Ms. Figen Yagli, a full-time teacher of nearly 25 years from Turkey, to spend a year in the U.S.; plans are already underway to expand the program to include additional teachers.

Additionally, this summer, the Society has joined the Moon and Stars Project, a nonprofit organization highlighting Turkish arts and culture in the United States, in supporting the month-long *Summer Art Residency Program* at the School of Visual Arts in New York. The resident in this summer's program, Burcu Yagcioglu, recently presented her work to the public in an open studio exhibition. During the program, she had the exclusive use of a small studio located in School of Visual Arts' Chelsea Building, as well as exposure to the New York art scene and frequent contact with the school's renowned faculty.

The American Turkish Society has also been a long-standing supporter of "Ebru: Reflections of Cultural Diversity in Turkey." *Ebru*, a photography project by Atilla Durak that reflects Turkey's ethnic and cultural diversity, has come to a successful completion this summer with the release of a book and an exhibit, which can be viewed at Binbirdirek Cistern (Philoxenus) in Istanbul's Sultanahmet district until July 21.

The American Turkish Society, founded in 1949, is America's oldest not-for-profit organization seeking to enhance economic, political, and cultural ties between Turkey and the United States. The Society achieves its mission by bringing together leaders in government, including Prime Ministers, Ministers of State and Ambassadors, as well as business leaders, journalists, and scholars covering a spectrum of fields. It also initiates and sponsors a variety of international educational and cultural programs.

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Members of the press wishing to learn more about the American Turkish Society may contact Selen Ucak, Executive Director, at 212-583-7614.