



### Nagorno Karabagh Arts Launches its 3rd Annual Festival of Shushi

Nagorno Karabakh Arts and Music Project (NK Arts) presented its third annual Festival of Shushi on September 12th and 13th at the historic fortress of Shushi. The 2003 Festival of Shushi premiered Nane Ballet, Yerevan's leading modern dance company, with a captivating program called "When the Heart Speaks."

Under the creative direction of Narine Topolyan, Nanet Ballet activated this unique historic landmark with the extraordinary talent of 35 young female dancers who performed traditional Armenian as well as ethno-jazz, Spanish flamenco, and Caucasian dances. Preceding Nanet Ballet's nightly performances the festival featured the Shushi Quartet and Artsakh's Vernadoun pop-folk trio.

Built over two centuries ago the old fortress of Shushi with its ancient entry provides a spectacular setting for NK Arts annual festival, which is conceived as a means to stimulate economic growth and social recovery for this otherwise isolated region in the world.

"The revival of Shushi, Artsakh's ancient capital and once a dynamic cultural center, is of paramount importance for the renewal of a society that's in transition," says Neery Melkonian, NK Arts Director. "Karabakh has been deprived of essentials on the cultural front which are taken for granted elsewhere."

With the cooperation of the Karabakh government NK Arts has developed a long-term approach to the redevelopment of the festival site in conjunction with the ongoing development of the annual festival. This year, NK Arts is collaborating with Land and Culture Organization to clean and restore this historic landmark and its surrounding area, which encompasses an abandoned open-air cinema, a children's playground and a cafe.

The Armenia Tree Project is also joining this unprecedented effort to begin permanent landscaping and to beautify the site. It is a known fact that in difficult times the arts become more important in our daily lives.

"This is especially true for Karabakh where people, against all odds, have struggled for their independence and deserve to lead dignified lives," says Armen Sargsyan, NKR Cultural and Educational Minister.

A production team of 12 young professionals from Stepanakert and Shushi has been working round the clock for the past two weeks to assure the successful delivery of various aspects of the festival including sound and lighting, design, public relations, hospitality, and community outreach. In 2001 and 2002 Shushi witnessed the successful launch of NK Arts music and film festivals. The 2003 dance Festival of Shushi is one more step towards the commitment of placing Karabakh on the festival map of the world.

Founded in 1999, NK ARTS is a non-profit organization dedicated to generate dialogue and advocate understanding among cultures and distanced peoples. Its goal is to provide local jobs

## Armenia Tree Project



and vocational training in the cultural sphere of this emerging nation. NK Arts is sponsored by New York Foundation for the Arts and the Cultural and Educational Ministry of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR). For additional information please contact: Armine Alexanian, public relations manager, [NK\\_arts@yahoo.com](mailto:NK_arts@yahoo.com)