

# ARA TOPOUZIAN

## Biography

Showing an interest in music in his early youth, Ara played music throughout the public school music program and in college, he began studying Armenian and Middle Eastern classical and folk music.

Performing with a local Armenian band, Ara eventually branched out and began performing as a solo and ensemble musician throughout the Midwest and East Coast.

In 1991, he formed American Recording Productions (ARP) with the intent to record and preserve this type of world music. To date, his award winning record label has produced over thirty recordings of Armenian and Middle Eastern music. ARP products are distributed internationally in major retail outlets and can be heard on several world music and NPR radio stations. He has performed at several Armenian weddings and social events, world music concerts, nightclubs, and folk festivals throughout the country. Ara's music has been featured in several PBS documentaries that have been aired nationwide.

Along with a multitude of Detroit-based world musicians, Ara has performed with several well-known Armenian, Greek, and Middle Eastern performers and ensembles throughout the country. Some notable musicians he has performed include: George Mgrdichian, Onnik Dinkjian, Mal Barsamian, John Berberian, Joe Zeytoonian, James Stoyhoff and the Chicago Immigrant Orchestra. He also has performed with jazz, fusion, rock, and blues artists/ensembles such as the following notable artists: Wendel Harrison, Sean Blackman, Colton Weatherston, and Immigrant Suns.

## Instruments Performed

Kanun (laptop harp), Duduk (Armenian oboe), Gclarinet, Dumbek (Middle Eastern hand drum), Def (Middle Eastern tambourine), and a variety of Middle Eastern frame drums.

## Awards

- Winner of the AFMA Armenian Music Awards for producing "*The Music of Komitas Vartabed*" (best traditional album of 2000).
- Winner of the AFMA Armenian Music Awards for producing "*Echo of the Mountains*" (best traditional instrumental album of 2001).

## Teaching

Ara has taught workshops for both children and adults demonstrating various Armenian and Middle Eastern instruments and folk music.

## Concert Appearances

Ara has performed (private and public) concerts throughout Michigan and around the country including events for: Chef Emeril Lagasse, City of Detroit, Wayne County Executive Robert A. Ficano and Author Peter Balakian. Some of the notable venues Ara has performed included: Cranbrook Art Museum, Detroit Institute of Arts, East Dearborn Arab International Festival, General Motors, International Institute/Detroit Festival of the Arts, Majestic Theater, Motor City Casino, The Field Museum, University of Michigan, World Music Festival Chicago.

## Television Appearances

Detroit Public Television, Public Broadcasting System, Bloomfield Public Schools Television, Southwestern Oakland County Cable Commission

*"Live From Detroit is a stunning two-disc live performance of Armenian and other traditional Middle Eastern dance music led by accomplished kanun player Ara Topouzian."*

➤ Joslyn Layne, All Music Guide

*"Largely joyous, For The Children of Armenia is an exemplary document of the melodic possibilities of the Armenian zither."*

➤ Tom "Tearaway" Schulte, Perfect Sound Forever Magazine

*"...Topouzian plays crisply and cleanly, bringing vibrant new life to old music."*

➤ Taylor McNeil, Bostonia

*"The brainchild of Kanun player Ara Topouzian, the ARP label has done much the last several years to improve the universe of Middle Eastern recordings, both with reissues and new recordings."*

➤ Pacific Winds Musical Productions

*"Ara Topouzian paints a musical portrait that conjures up turn of the century images of a homeland left behind."*

➤ Martin Curti, New World Buzz

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