

## Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300



(F1E)

## Embroiderer's art—songs in textiles

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

**Y**ERANOUHIE H. Gotting-Haldostian came from Germany to Bloomfield Hills to visit her brother and sister-in-law, Dr. Berj and Alice Haldostian, with a mission in mind.

True, she was bringing special gifts for her nieces and nephew, but more than that she was bringing a rich, priceless heritage to share with the Armenian community.

Gotting-Haldostian (in German, the married and maiden names are reversed) has been collecting Armenian needlework for 50 years. She has studied, researched and traveled the world to find the finest examples possible of this art form, which dates back thousands of years.

She remembers the day it took root, her 13th birthday. Her family lived in Turkish Armenia. "I was expecting a pair of silk stockings—that was the fashion then. So you can imagine how I felt when I was given two exquisite, lace trimmed hankies. My mother noticed my disappointment and said, 'The eyes have to drink beauty to quench the thirst of the soul.'"

From then on the young woman became increasingly aware and appreciative of fine stitching. She perfected her own skills. "Embroidery is a type of art which can be appreciated only if you understand it. For me, the top criterion is the quality of the stitch. Second is its execution. It must be perfect in detail, the flour, the better."

**SHE LISTED HISTORICAL** significance, historical association and folklore value as other important considerations. Since embroidery was such an integral part of the life of Armenian women at every level, from peasant to princess, it is intricately tied to the history of the people—how and where they lived, where they traveled, what they wore, how they furnished their homes, how they celebrated holidays.



Peacock is made of real fish scales embroidered in gold on black velvet.

days, their history and folklore.

The embroidery enlightens on all these subjects, Gotting-Haldostian said. For instance, certain stitches are peculiar to isolated Armenian settlements in Turkey. Variations of these can be found in communities where there was more contact with the outside world.

"Irga is the purest Armenian stitch, and is a Marash stitch; but in India and Pakistan, the festive costumes are often decorated with Irga, inserting small round mirrors into the design. Marash Armenian immigrants to Madras, Calcutta and to Bombay have fecundated the country with their favorite stitch."

Another stitch she has traced in her writings is Alishah. The Crusaders brought it from the Armenians back to Europe where the missionaries then took it to China. "Otherwise, how could China, the grandmaster of embroidery, the artist of the most exquisite colored-stitches, be the mother and producer of a mediocre drawn-thread stitch," she writes.

But for all the treasures of fine needlework she had displayed, none was more impressive than the embroidery on eccu silk spread out on the dining room table.

The pieces were a curtain with matching sheers. Embroidered on the curtain are full-size intricately worked green chestnut tree leaves edged in gold thread and chestnuts in various stages of splitting open. On the sheers are dragon flies and stars in gold thread.

"If I had not heard of the Baghdad-darian School in Turkey—my father (a teacher) sent a student there, I would never have known about this," she said.

**THE SCHOOL**, where silkworm culture is taught, is in Brussa and is famous for its silk, chestnut trees and for its embroidery, she said.

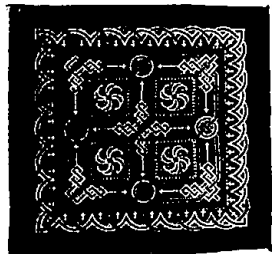
She knew about the piece before she found it, quite by accident, in Athens after making it known that she was interested in acquiring fine embroidery. Another customer had asked the dealer to split it because it was too big (which he did) before deciding not to buy it. Gotting-Haldostian took the money she had put aside for a fur coat and, if even though she was terribly distressed that the masterpiece had been cut.

She is certain it all was done by one artist. "These must have been made to sing the glories of Brussa," she said. The wings of the dragonflies (in various positions), made with gold and silver thread are not attached to the silk. The thread is 14 and 18 carat gold and silver with gold plate.

"I make lace (the wings) with metal thread is a fortune. If you have never worked gold thread, you can't possibly know the difficulty. If it turns, it breaks."

She looked at the yards of embroi-

Staff photos by Jerry  
Zolynsky



The design of this work in shades of orange, red and gold on dark brown velvet goes back to those done found on the khatchkars (grave stones) of old Armenia. The circle is the symbol of eternity.

The wings of the dragon fly are only attached to the silk at the tip. Each of these files is slightly different in position and development.

dered silk before her on the table, with its pencil thin embroidered gold lines and pin-size mounds of gold dots and said—"to do this with metal is something only angels can do—to do a line like this with gold thread is beyond comprehension and description."

**PATIENCE DOES pay off.** It took her 12 years to acquire a collection of needlework flowers, actual size and botanically correct, made by a woman.

The work is so intricate that it is difficult to conceive of the time it must have taken to make each one. The colors of each honeysuckle were

carefully chosen to indicate which blooms have just come out and which have passed their peak. Gotting-Haldostian pointed to a relationship between these intricate nose-gay-size bouquets and the flowers that often edge the beautiful sheer headscarf of an Armenian bride.

In her conversation, she calls those who made the articles in her collection "singers with a needle." Her opening statement in her treatise on embroidery is "Art in any form is a channel of communication through which the heart-beats of a people, hence of humanity can be heard."

## Where to see the needlework

There will be two exhibits of the embroidery and needlework collected by Yeranouhie H. Gotting-Haldostian in the next few weeks — at Bellan Art Center of Troy and the Recreation Center of St. John Armenian Church of Southfield.

The works titled, "Singers with a Needle: Masterpieces of Armenian Needlework and Embroidery," will be at the Bellan Art Center, 5980



Yeranouhie H. Gotting-Haldostian uses a magnifying glass to explain the intricacies of the embroidery that depicts the



While visiting her brother, Dr. Berj Haldostian of Bloomfield Hills, Yeranouhie H. Gotting-Haldostian wanted to share again her enthusiasm for needlework. Here they admire a life-size flower made with needle and thread by an Armenian woman who lived in Beirut.

## Japan loves these talented musicians

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

Harriet Kerstin Allvin of Bloomfield Hills wasn't sure what to expect when she went on a two-month performing tour of Japan and China with flutist Laura Larson late last summer.

Larson, 37, head of the flute at CCS-Institute of Music and Dance, performed and studied there for a year in 1985. Not so for Allvin, 27. This was her first trip to the orient and she was in for some surprises, both pleasant and humorous.

They will return later this month as guests for a special concert for the Toyota City International Association's promotion of international exchanges. They will perform the Mozart Concerto for Flute and Harp with the Toyota City Philharmonic as well as solos.

As Allvin spoke of the concerts they gave in Japan—in small communities and major cities, in grand concert halls and modest settings such as a candlemaker's home—she made an overall observation.

"They are so appreciative. They love Western classical music and they are familiar with Western repertoire—even the children. They love Bizet and famous opera arias."

**SHE PAUSED** and added something that had obviously surprised her. "Strangely enough they love Stephen Foster songs. They know all the words and could sing along in English. So for me we would play songs such as 'My Old Kentucky Home,' 'Camptown Races' and 'Oh! Susanna.' And they liked Irish tunes, 'Amen! I'm a Dancer,' 'Danny Boy' and 'Last Rose of Summer.'"

Then as if to summarize she said, "The Japanese soak up Western culture. They want to be like Americans. China is different. I got the impression they didn't like foreigners."

However, she said that when they performed in Beijing (for more than 700 people) she knew they loved the music and the concert.

"I was very impressed with the Beijing Conservatory of Music," she said as she described their tour of that as well as trips to the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace.

But she and Larson obviously felt they had actually experienced more of Japan than China where they were carefully chaperoned. "In Japan, we traveled by train and in a van with the harp and our tons of luggage. We went by van when we crossed the Japanese Alps over little, tiny roads. Sometimes we stayed at hotels and sometimes with families. We spent several days at our manager's Swiss style chalet at the base of Mt. Fuji."

"I really enjoyed staying with the families. I ate their food and slept on a mat on the floor (in the Japanese tradition)."

And apparently Alps is Alps, no matter where they happen to be. The people of the Japanese Alps love Swiss music and yes, they did bring out a couple of their youngsters who were expert yodelers to perform for the American duo.

It is easy to believe that Allvin and Larson endeared themselves to the Japanese. Allvin, with her beautiful head of honey blond curly hair and large, shining blue eyes, has the look of an ingenue. Yet, she is poised, mature and gracious.

Her comments and observations about the six-week trip were, with few exceptions, upbeat. Both

she and Larson made the most of every moment. They enjoyed the people, the sights, the many side trips. They asked questions and were eager to see and learn everything they could.

But, "When I got back to the U.S., I was very thankful for where I lived."

**THE QUALITY** of the music these two presented in Japan is substantial. They played works by Martin Scott Kosins (of Michigan) as well as Mozart, Dvorak, Debussy, Persichetti, Faure, Martin, Donizetti and Rossini. Allvin and Larson sold every copy of a tape highlighting their musical program.

The tape is only available here by ordering from Allvin at 642-5097. She has also recorded her own new wave compositions with electric harp and (non electric) harp and synthesizer. That recording is available through Harmony House.

She and her father, Ray Allvin, who works closely with her as advisor/representative, agree that classical music is her first love. Yet, she said she has found a niche in modern music. "I love to write and arrange."

The two tapes show her diverse talents, something else that probably made the Japanese want the Allvin/Larson Duo for another tour. They will return next summer for a three-week tour and will play with the Osaka Philharmonic in March of 1990. Next February they will be doing a small tour in Florida.

Their recent tour was sponsored by the Walbro Corporation of Cass City and Columbia Coffee. Allvin said she hoped to find a sponsor so they could perform the Toyota City concerts locally in a few weeks.



Laura Larson, left, flute, and Kerstin Allvin, harp, are already booked for several more concert trips to Japan. Larson studied and performed there two years ago and returned this summer for six weeks with Allvin who was seeing it for the first time.