

# noosardel

July 2001 6751, תשס"א

# *noosardel* is here!\*



\*just add water

Inside

Fred Parhad

the making of an artist

*Rabi* Nemrod Simono Scholarship

Sponsoring Savvy Schooling

### The Team

*Sennacherib Daniel*

sdaniel70@yahoo.com

*David Chibo*

davidchibo@hotmail.com

*Sakhi Warda*

Sanharib@hotmail.com

*Fraydon Heskell*

samerheskel@hotmail.com

*Haitham Patrous*

c/o Nakosha@hotmail.com

*Nineveh Daniel*

m.daniel@mei.unimelb.edu.au

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***Nakosha* was established in 1997 with the view of advocating free speech and establishing a social link among our Australian and worldwide communities, especially those in our homeland.**

***Nakosha* is growing with a contemporary generation of Assyrians who are aware of their identity, with an understanding and appreciation of our culture, language and heritage.**

***Nakosha* is a non-profit publication. Holding a neutral stand within the community, its views are not religiously or politically motivated – they are based on human values not sectarian beliefs.**

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Email articles to:  
nakosha@hotmail.com

P.O. BOX 948 Merlynston,  
Victoria, Australia 3058.  
[www.atour.com/aygv](http://www.atour.com/aygv)



**A** lot of things can happen in four years – it's the average amount of time it takes a university student to graduate with honours, worldwide information technology services spending should double in 4 years to \$1.4 trillion a year, and it takes that long to make a burger [apparently, from farmyard to fast-food table!]. *Nakosha* too has changed in four years, and we celebrate *its* birthday by adding more pages and content, along with a new website and overall look.

"Forty two editions divided by twelve equals three and a half years," I hear you say. True, that's the number of actual editions published, but the *Nakosha* team has been around for 4 years, the initial 6 months being taken up by planning, arguing and sleepless nights. And what's with the name "*Nakosha*"? I hear you ask again.

Actually, the word "*nakosha*" itself is at least four *thousand* years old: it's Syriac for "bell" (also *zaga*). The idea behind choosing the name was meant as a metaphor for a bell ringing change - to awaken and inform those who care to read the publication, with a particular emphasis on the young members of our community. That, and the fact that it's a rather beautiful name used by the late Dr. Fraydon Bet-Abraham (nicknamed "Fraydon Atouraya") for his own turn of the century publication, seemed a good enough reason to chose it as a name for *this* magazine.

While the look may have changed, the mission statement of *Nakosha* has not, despite a change of hands of editors: it remains a non-religious, non-political publication assessing issues involving young Assyrians particularly in Australia but also the world. That's not to say *Nakosha* shies away from religion or politics – these are as much a part of being Assyrian as *shirwa* and *shaykhani*... what we really mean is that the publication is non-denominational and tied to no particular organization. True, *Nakosha* is now officially linked with the *Zinda Corporation* but this link remains purely at a financial and information-gathering level and *Nakosha* continues to maintain full editorial privileges.

*Nakosha* hopes to continue to increase its pages, turn all glossy and colourful and spread its coverage to include Assyrians' activities

wherever they may be in Australia – but to do this, *Nakosha* needs more of the bread and butter that any publication must have – writers. So to all you closet journalists, essayists and critics - get out there, sharpen your *qalameh* [pencils] and put your thoughts on paper!

**I**n many societies art, and at times even education, are viewed as luxuries. Especially in Australia, the arts continue to be poorly funded.

But a society does so at its own peril. Art serves the vital role of holding a mirror up to society – both at its worse and best. Unlike ancient times, modern Assyrian art has sadly been relatively neglected. One individual who is bringing Assyrian art back to the forefront is Fred Parhad. Mr. Parhad may still be relatively unknown in Australia, but to American Assyrians he is a prominent individual, with his many bronze statues decorating public streets in U.S. cities.

The use of bronze as an artistic medium of self-expression to represent human figures has always intrigued me: bronze is cold, hard and lifeless. Flesh is warm, soft and alive. The artist who masters bronze as a means of self-expression breathes life into the bronze, giving his statues a soul. Looking at Fred's busts of Assyrian kings and queens, their details pieced together from a careful study of Assyrian reliefs and artefacts, you sometimes need to remind yourself that you're not peering into the face of a living monarch.

But enough about the medium – Fred is always more concerned with content: and you'll find plenty of *that* in his works.

Always passionate, at times controversial, Fred himself – like his work – never fails to leave a lasting impression on those he meets.

Assyrians have always greatly respected education – it's been encouraged and instilled into us by our parents for countless generations. Perhaps it's a carry over from ancient times when Assyrian education systems taught the world a lot of what it knows today. We report on one institution – *The Simono Scholarship* – that has been encouraging Assyrian students in Australia for the last fifteen years. Find out who the winners of this illustrious award are this year! ■

Sennacherib Daniel



## CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE IN IRAQ ASKS FOR LIFTING OF EMBARGO AGAINST IRAQ

Courtesy of the Post-Standard Syracuse (June 16), Gloria Wright

(ZNDA: Baghdad) A five-day conference entitled *The Church at the Service of Humanity and Peace*, attended by more than 300 representatives of churches from around the world, was organized last month by the Chaldean Church, Iraq's largest Christian denomination. It called for an end to the decade-old United Nations (U.N.) sanctions against Iraq. "Enough, enough, enough to this embargo imposed on Iraq for more than 10 years without any justification," the conference's final declaration says. "Enough to the embargo that is against God's law, which calls for mercy,

has been in Iraq since the first century, he said. Today there are about a million Christians in Iraq, comprising a variety of churches: Assyrian Orthodox and Assyrian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox and Armenian Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Latin Catholic and Protestant denominations. Some of the churches perform their rites in Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ, Hatem said. When Jesus worshipped, he spoke Hebrew, but "he used Aramaic in daily life." Hatem said the Iraqis he spoke with "said they are free to worship, but they also said there is more fanaticism today, probably across the board." The rise in fanaticism can be traced in part to the sanctions imposed by the U.N. — urged on by the United States — after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. The U.N. has refused to lift the sanctions until it is

"My focus is on the human life that is being destroyed."

## MUSIC OF WILLIAM DANIEL PERFORMED AT TAMPA BAY COMPOSERS' FORUM



Courtesy of St. Petersburg Times (June 24), by John Fleming

# Assyrian W

forgiveness and human respect. The results of this embargo is a mass killing of a whole nation." Bishop James Moynihan of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse was invited by officials of Iraq's Armenian Orthodox Church to send a delegation to the May conference.

The delegation included Rick Hatem, a member of the L'Arche Community, and Dick Keough, a member of Pax Christi Syracuse, Cynthia Banas of Vernon and Anne Herman of Binghamton. Hatem and Keough also went to Iraq in January with a delegation of about 30 people sponsored by Conscience International, an Atlanta-based humanitarian group. Hatem said he came away from the conference with a deeper appreciation for Christians in Iraq, a country where the population of 23 million people is about 95 percent Muslim. Religious freedom is guaranteed in Iraq's constitution, but it is "easy for Christians to feel caught in the middle," Hatem said.

Some Iraqis hold Christians in their own country responsible for the sanctions imposed by the "Christian West," Hatem said. "At the same time, they're very proud to be Iraqis." The Christian church

convinced Iraq has dismantled its 'weapons of mass destruction'. Before 1990, the government of Saddam Hussein provided free health care and free education for every person in Iraq. Now, unemployment in some parts of the country stands at 60 to 65 percent.

"The middle class has been pretty much wiped out during the 11 years of sanctions," Hatem said. "... The sanctions are not affecting Saddam and his circle. If a person has money, they can find anything they want in Iraq." The Iraqi people are suffering, and struggling to survive. As they become more desperate, they become more fanatical, he said. "We're making it more dangerous for ourselves," Hatem said. "We're sowing the seeds of hatred." Keough said he returned from the May trip to Iraq believing there is a "need for healing and reconciliation" between the United States and Iraq. His dream is to get small groups of six to 12 Americans to go to Iraq to meet Iraqi people. He said he met with parents of a 7-year-old girl who died because the medical equipment she needed was barred under the sanctions. "I pledged to them to tell the people of this country what's happening," he said.

(ZNDA: St. Petersburg) Five string quartets — four being performed for the first time — wound up the *Tampa Bay Composers' Forum* season last Friday at the Palladium Theater in Florida. In an impressive display of the vitality in new music at the grassroots, the program ranged from a quartet by a college student to one by a professor emeritus, with styles from jazz to abstract to William Daniel's Assyrian song and dance.

The ensemble that played it all was superbly versatile. Violinists Eugene Bazhanov and Kim Padgett, violist Virginia Huchton and cellist Theresa Villani brought out the individual character in each of the unfamiliar works, and they didn't take an intermission.

The most ambitious work of the evening was Donald M. Wilson's *Stabile IV*, inspired by the 1960s, more specifically an Alexander Calder sculpture from that time. Wilson, professor emeritus of music at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, said his piece was "not nice," meaning it was not melodic, being mainly concerned with sound textures that included slithery, high-pitched effects along with wordless vocalizing that resembled breathing exercises. The

analogy with modern art was apt. The undergraduate composer was Kendall Burnham, an Eckerd College student, whose quartet was built around long, mournful melodic lines. Economy was not its strong suit, as only the middle movement exhibited much unity of form. Still, an excess of ideas comes with the territory for a young composer, and this was a promising premiere. St. Petersburg musician and composer Joseph Ierna was inspired years ago by a performance by jazz pianist Horace Silver to improvise a theme that ultimately ended up in Ierna's first string quartet, *Spanish Themes*, which opened the program Friday. It featured a bouncy first violin part reminiscent of swing fiddlers Joe Venuti and Stephan Grapelli and a melancholy cello solo. Vernon Taranto Jr., who teaches at St. Petersburg Junior College, took a miniaturist approach with *Trois*

the Khabur border point between Turkey and Iraq, after banning traders, Turkish citizens and taxi drivers from entering Kurdistan without obtaining visas from the Iraqi embassy in Ankara.

This means that it will not be possible for the Turks to enter Iraq without a visa which would consequently limit Turkish trade with Kurdistan region. Every Turkish driver has also to pay the Iraqi embassy visa fees that exceeds the profit made in taking the goods to the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Hundreds of Turkish citizens, who have been travelling to the Kurdistan region

## MESOPOTAMIAN SEAL SOLD FOR \$ 424,000 AT AN AUCTION

Courtesy of the Wall Street Journal (June 22); by Robert J. Hughesca 2100 B.C.



(ZNDA: New York) Ancient Mesopotamia didn't survive in a big way — unlike Egypt, its culture left behind few enormous sculptures and no pyramids. But the little things, such as clay tablets and cylinder seals, lasted. A cylinder seal was sold for a record

# World News

petites bagatelles, less than five minutes of music marked by brilliance of sound and whimsical technique, as when the players used pencils instead of bows to open the second movement.

## JEWISH, CHALDEAN YOUTHS WORK TOGETHER

(ZNDA: Detroit) A group of 30 youths ages 16-20 from Temple Israel worked alongside 30 teens from the Chaldean community last week on a community rebuilding project in northwest Detroit. The program, called **J.A.C.O.B.** (Jewish And Chaldean Opportunity Builders), was the first project to link *Temple Israel* and *Chaldean Americans Reaching and Encouraging*.

## TURKEY REPORTEDLY RESTRICTS TRAVEL TO IRAQ THROUGH KURDISH REGION

The following is the text of a report by the Assyrian Democratic Movement newspaper *Bahra* on 15 June.

(ZNDA: Dohuk) The Turkish authorities have imposed new travel regulations at

without having Iraqi entry visas and with minimum entry procedures, such as a stamp to notify that the holder has passed through Khabur crossing and whose aim was to visit relative and families and for tourism, will not be able to make such an inexpensive journey. These Turkish citizens used to carry with them to the region clothes and Turkish commodities, and return with cheap Iraqi goods. The Dohuk Governorate will be particularly affected by the new Turkish travel restrictions. They will bring to an end the business of many restaurants, hotels and health clinics which were frequently used by Turks looking for treatments and surgeries because of the cheap rates. The markets of other cities will also be affected by this new measure. The Turkish government has also banned taxis that pre-date 1991 and new vehicles fitted with big tanks [to cross the borders] in order to reduce the oil trade on the border. This Turkish procedure does not apply to lorry drivers who transport goods to the Kurdish region and return with diesel fuel, despite the ever-decreasing number of these lorries, as trade was down to a third compared to previous months.

\$424,000 last week at Christie's International in New York, during the auction house's antiquities sales. Cylinder seals, about an inch or two long, were inscribed and used to mark personal property and to make legally binding documents.

This seal depicts a king being fanned by a servant, as the king blesses a stag standing on its hind legs. Because so little writing or documents from the time exist, the seals are valuable to archaeologists as they provide clues to the region's society. They feature religious motifs, representations of divine figures, mythological figures, rulers and scribes. They were rolled onto wet clay, to indicate receipt of goods or services. The seal, from northwest Iran, was bought by a European dealer, probably for an institution, said G. Max Bernheimer, head international specialist for Antiquities at Christie's.

Courtesy of

**Zinda**  
magazine  
"Think Assyrian"

[www.zindamagazine.com](http://www.zindamagazine.com)

In proportion to their tiny worldwide population, the Assyrians are over-represented in certain professions, such as medicine, engineering and computer science. Nothing strange, really, given their ancestor's obsession with the sciences. Surprisingly, though, Assyrians are relatively *under*-represented in the arts today - all the more unusual considering the ancient Assyrians even *greater* obsession for the visual arts. While Assyrian artists known throughout their own communities are beginning to flourish, those making an impact on the international community - *as Assyrians* - are still relatively few. Enter Fred Parhad.

Born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1947, controversial Assyrian sculptor Mr. Parhad migrated to North America at a young age. He shunned academia at the highest levels, taking a permanent rain check on an education in art at the University of California. He moved to New York where he worked in

art foundries and was granted permission to create sculptures of the Assyrian collection at New York's *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, a true turning point for him - and modern Assyrian art.

Two thousand five hundred years without an important, modern Assyrian monument in a public space - until Mr. Parhad was commissioned to cast a bronze Ashurbanipal monument, officially unveiled at San Francisco's *United States Plaza* in 1988. He became known not only to the Assyrian world, but perhaps more importantly to the *western* world, as thousands of people pass this monument each day. They not only get to marvel at Mr. Parhad's sculptural talents, but also learn about Assyrian history.

Normally not inclined to participate in interviews (he *hates* them and has even refused to write a resume for years!) *Nakosha* was fortunate enough to secure this on-line interview. David Chibo gives us the inside story.

*Sennacherib Daniel*

# Fred



**David Chibo:** *Please give me your name, position and a 'brief history' of yourself as a sculptor.*

**Fred Parhad:** My name is Fred Parhad, my position is prone. I tried to avoid being an "artist" all my life - can't stand what it is these days. Tried everything to avoid it, finally gave in at the age of 30.

**DC:** *Why did you choose sculpture, and did you try any other forms of Art, for example painting, before deciding?*

**FP:** I paint, but that's private. The medium you choose isn't as important as your "message", and as trite as it sounds Art implies a message...it means you have something to say to someone. Your message can be "get lost" or "I love you", but Art at its truest tries to communicate something to someone.

**DC:** *You were born an Assyrian - but what made you a "Born-again Assyrian"?*

**FP:** I wasn't interested *at all* in being Assyrian. From what I saw of it, coming to America at an early age, it was a shabby and degrading thing. In the '50s America was not a "melting pot" - it was an "injection mold". There were no points given for being "ethnic" - everyone wanted to be "white", very badly. Being Assyrian, therefore, meant persisting in

a set of behaviours which stood directly in the way of becoming successful and accepted in this country. We, as children, were placed in a very difficult position. Our parents wanted us to excel, that's why they came here, for opportunity - at the same time they were very upset when we "changed" and adopted the new ways of these Western countries. It was an impossible balance to maintain so most of us opted for "blending" in and going along in order to get along. But it wasn't a good "fit".

**DC:** *What first awoke you to the ancient Assyrian heritage and culture? Was this the main reason you choose to focus on Assyrian sculpture?*

**FP:** I had persistent dreams of being chased by a milk-white bull. He was huge and ferocious. Sometimes in these dreams I would be chased by him, breathing hot steam from his distended nostrils...there would be a wall, a ruin of some kind, on a vast plain that I would hide behind. But it was only a fragment and invariably the bull would chase me round it to finally leap over it, showering bricks on my head at which I would wake up in a sweat. Other times I was helping a young child, always a girl, escape from some sort of institution and the bull would run after us on a lonely stretch

of beach somewhere and we would run, her hand in mine, across the yielding sand.... the bull coming closer and closer. Then one night I woke up speaking Assyrian, something I had steadfastly refused to do till then. Soon after that I decided to kidnap my young son from his mother where he was unhappy and the two of us ran off to New York where I resolved once and for all that I would live or die a sculptor. It was on a visit to the Metropolitan Museum that I was struck dumb and my eyes opened by seeing, for the first time, sculptures from my own heritage. The Lion Of Ishtar from the processional Way in Babylon was the piece that did it. Later there were others until I saw *Lamasu*, the Winged Bull. I never had seen any of these pieces before, but I was more attracted to them than any before or since.

The last dream I had occurred then, of the bull chasing me and the young child. In the last dream, I turned to face the bull, the child at my side frightened, holding my hand. I was afraid no more, I faced it, and as it came thundering up the beach at us it dissolved into fog and mist and sailed harmlessly by - the child and I walked on, laughing in the moonlight. In that last dream I stopped running, stopped

denying...I turned and faced my destiny and the fear and danger dissolved. I knew I was Assyrian for really the first time. Till then I'd avoided my destiny as both sculptor and Assyrian...no more.

**DC:** *What is your philosophy on life?*

**FP:** I wouldn't presume to offer one. I like what Socrates said...never mind facts and origins, live a good and happy life...be productive and useful.

**DC:** *What has been your finest achievement as an artist, to date?*

**FP:** I know the value of the Assyrian monuments I've done to date does not lie in their artistic merit. I am however, inordinantly pleased with myself for figuring out a way to get money out of Assyrians...that is an artistic achievement of the highest order, and I take great pride in that.

**DC:** *What are your future plans?*

**FP:** Though I say "never again" I know better than that. I know I will break my head and heart against the stony wall of self-hatred Assyrians have built up. I want to leave as many "markers"...*Kudurus*, of our having walked this way. I believe they may mean something to young people in the future. It's a nice fantasy anyway...far preferable to the ones that were peddled to me in Sunday School.

**DC:** *What is an Artist, and what is the job of an Artist?*

**FP:** The first job of an artist is to maintain Life while trying to do Art.

After that, it is whatever he or she chooses to do. Robert Louis Stevenson said it best when he wrote that in the end, one has to make Art just because one feels like it. To me, sculpture uses the human or animal form to convey the very soul of "life". In some way, the artist is always speaking to God when he or she creates. The subject matter is always the "soul", however one chooses to define it.

**DC:** *What does the word Assyria mean to you?*

**FP:** To me it means an appreciation and an awareness of "Right". We are what we were...our history is badly misunderstood. We are the remnants of one of the finest civilizations to ever have existed and being "Assyrian" now means setting the record straight. It is more a state of mind than any political affiliation or ethnic identity. "Assyria", is telling the truth, no matter what the price. "Assyria" is justice, the just reward...good or bad, of a people...as close to the "truth" as can be discerned, no matter what the obstacles. It isn't a "place" at all, but a frame of mind, a demand that justice denied to one, means no one gets any. So many things in life are "compromised" and sold out...as we have been. To me, being Assyrian, means demanding justice for my own, and therefore for all others.

Assyria isn't a place...we don't need a patch of sand. We exist in many lands and as we were once first in Empire we are now first in having to figure out how one goes about maintaining what was best without causing new wars and misery.

When the time was right for Empires, we had one of the best. The old empires nurtured and developed and protected the arts and institutions of civilization. Today it is the empires, the Superpowers who act as the Barbarians,

destroying and stealing and living off of past accomplishments.

Empire building is out of date. We have another challenge, the same one facing the Jews only they were forced to "regress"...to go back to borders and warfare and more killing. We Assyrians have a chance to show what really makes for "identity".. to explain to ourselves and others how we kept an identity all those years without a country or borders or armies or parliaments. We can grow into the many countries we occupy and take the best from all of them, combining them into a world-view in which it will not be necessary to kill another that we may live...to destroy another civilization that ours may endure. It has been given to us, once again, to find a new way to be proud, to be alive and vital without destroying anyone else. We met the challenge of Empire brilliantly. I think we can do it again in a new age and in a new way. Our story is far from over...this is a part of it, perhaps the greater part.

**DC:** *Do the Assyrian people have a true understanding of Art?*

**FP:** No. We have been kicked in the teeth too often for that. We have been forced to begin again almost with each generation, to just take care of the simple needs of our families for food and shelter. No people on earth owe more of a debt to Art than we do for it was the discovery of our artifacts which first proved our existence...in the West. That, and the realization that the people who made these things could *not* have been the barbarians portrayed in the Bible and in subsequent writings all taken from that biased source.

In these monuments I've tried to convey to people the power of Art, even as a tool. I've asked that they not think of them as pieces of "Art", but advertising pure and simple. In no other way could we have been given the prestige locations reserved for public monuments, places you couldn't buy or rent at any price...for as long as a nation endures...from which we could reach millions of people, over time, in such a cost effective and lovely and positive way. If you pro-rate a \$150,000 monument over fifty or two hundred years, it becomes apparent that it is a ridiculously cheap way to buy "advertising"...and one which does not diminish over time, or requires so little maintenance.

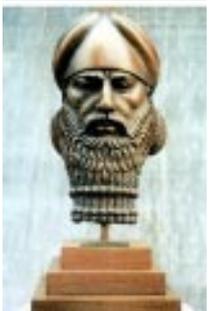
I tried to make of Art a practical thing, which of course our ancestors fully understood.

**DC:** *Any final thoughts to share with Nakosha's readership?*

**FP:** This heritage of ours is a gift. It can give us far more than it asks of us. But we have to be worthy of it. The world needs to hear how a group of people, so beset by both good and bad fortune, can persist against all odds.

Our story will bring hope to others, and we will again serve the function we once did when the world was a younger place. We have lost nothing. We have been given the chance to show others a higher form of civilization...again.

Someday the rest of the people on this planet will realize that a war anywhere means danger for their own children. That is something we should already realize. It would be a regression, a denial of our special status, to revert to a primitive form of nationalism and suffer the consequences. We are international...let's show how one can be that, and still be 'local', still be essentially 'you'. It is this essential part of us that has brought us this far. This is our latest gift to the world. ■



**Sankho Daniel, 30**  
**Doctor.**

**Born:** Kuwait.

**From a global perspective, what does Assyria mean to you?**

My view lies somewhere between two extremes – on the one hand, I believe it is a place in the Middle East locked between Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Lebanon: on the other hand, while I don't think we'll ever have a 'nation' called Assyria, we are entitled to an autonomous state in *Bet-Nahrain* where we can maintain our beliefs, language and customs.

**What gives you a sense of identity?** Syriac is by far the most important factor, as it is used everyday and serves as a constant reminder of who we are. Traditional holidays are important too, but not as important as language.

**What is the most significant event of Assyrian history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?** The discovery of ancient Assyrian treasures by Hormuzd Ramsan was a turning point for Assyrians – before then we knew ourselves by tribal or religious names only – Nestorians, *Jilwaye* or *Urmizhuaye*, for example. While we don't all necessarily agree on one name, at least we're all sure where our roots lie. O.K., it's not exactly the 20th century, but it's close enough!

**What was the low point of your life?** A 'mid-20s' crisis – not being sure of what I wanted in life and suffering from chronic self-doubt.

**What was the high point of life?** Getting over the 'mid-20s' crisis!

**What are your favourite pass-times?** Photography, writing, reading Syriac, travel- and *Nakosha*, of course.

**What is your favourite Assyrian dish?** Has to be *dolma* – it's the complex flavour of meat, rice and herbs all wrapped in vine leaves that does it for me; to be followed by *chai* and *kade*, naturally.

**What is your favourite Assyrian song?** These kind of questions are hard! Ask me next week and I'll give you a different answer! At the moment it's the vinyl version of Rommel Shamalta's 1978 *Boys and Girls* – it's got a great bass riff and the crackling of the vinyl is nice. They don't make 'em like they used to!

**What is your favourite non-Assyrian dish?** Most Assyrians go 'blah!!' to raw fish, but my fave dish is *sushi*. I have to eat it once a week.

**What is your favourite non-Assyrian song?** It's not a song but probably Elgar's *Cello Concerto*.

**Future goals?** Own my own business, 'retire' from real work at 40 and spend my time 'working' at my hobbies.

**What is your philosophy on life?** Still formulating one.



Profiler

Profiling the Assyrian community one by one, this new series is kicked off by the two Sennacheribs, Daniel and Warda.

**Sakhi Warda, 26**  
**(Almost)self-employed**

**Born:** Syria

**From a global perspective, what does Assyria mean to you?**

Assyria is a notion, it is an idea. I don't believe that it could ever materialise as a nation, but the concept of it eventuating is what keeps everyone going.

**What gives you a sense of identity?** My parents' claims to be Assyrian. By using Rene Descartes' method of deduction - you know the one? He used it to conclude "I think therefore I am". If you take away most aspects of identity, like cultural practices and language, you'll still be left with a sense of identity.

**What is the most significant event of Assyrian history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?**

During 1933 large numbers of Assyrians escaped from Iraq, but they re-settled in communities in Syria, and Turkey. This was a tight re-settlement. But the Gulf War in 1991 caused the greatest damage, as Assyrians were sent fleeing in every direction. The number of stable Assyrian communities has decreased. This translates into a threat to language and culture.

**What is the high point of your life?** Falling in love (Sorry, I'm a bit of a romantic).

**What is the low point of your life?** Falling out of love (Sorry again).

**What is your favourite pass-time?** Doing anything of artistic merit. I am a lover of music and literature (I can't get enough of Pink Floyed's music, and Douglas Adams' series *The Hitch Hikers's Guide to the Galaxy*).

**What is your favourite Assyrian dish?** *Dolma*.

**What is your favourite Assyrian song?** *Khoba D'Khorawate*, by Evan Agassi. It is an oldey, but I'm a sucker for old Assyrian music.

**What is your favourite non-Assyrian dish?** Caesar Salad - with chicken!

**What is your favourite non-Assyrian song?** Pink Floyd's *Shine on You Crazy Diamond*. The song goes for 25 minutes and 53 seconds, and it's broken up into two parts - one at the start of the album, the other part at the end of it. It's such a complex piece of music it could even be classified as an orchestral piece!

**Future goals?** Run my own business in Graphic Arts.

**What is your philosophy on life?** "Don't argue, they could be right!"

**Learn Your Language**

ܫܠܝܚܘܬܐ	<i>shleehutho</i>	mission	<i>shleekhutha</i>	ܫܠܝܚܘܬܐ
ܝܬܘܬܐ	<i>eythutho</i>	existence	<i>eythutha</i>	ܝܬܘܬܐ
ܝܬܘܬܐ	<i>yatho</i>	self	<i>yatha</i>	ܝܬܘܬܐ
ܪܝܢܝܘܐ	<i>rineeo</i>	thought	<i>rineeaa</i>	ܪܝܢܝܘܐ
ܓܝܒܐ	<i>geabo</i>	side	<i>geaba</i>	ܓܝܒܐ
ܩܢܝܬܐ	<i>pneetho</i>	zone	<i>pneetha</i>	ܩܢܝܬܐ
ܫܝܫܝܠܬܐ	<i>shishiltho</i>	chain/series	<i>shishiltha</i>	ܫܝܫܝܠܬܐ
ܓܘܒܐܝܢ	<i>gubaeeh</i>	elections	<i>gubaeeh</i>	ܓܘܒܐܝܢ
ܩܘܠܝܗ	<i>qualeh</i>	votes/voices	<i>qualeh</i>	ܩܘܠܝܗ
ܬܪܬܐ	<i>terto</i>	conscience	<i>terta</i>	ܬܪܬܐ

# Caricature on Life

## What do you think of today's Assyrian music?

▷ ▶ ?/?/  
Victoria,  
CANADA

▶▷As for contemporary Assyrian music, I like it, it is not bad, BUT, in my opinion the new Assyrian generation must not forget the real Assyrian culture, heritage and OLD music. One avenue to make the old music/songs more attractive to the new Assyrian generation is by blending the new wave of music and flavour of the century with the old one and come up with something that the new generation will like it. This is just my opinion - "A Scientist's opinion" - someone who loves to hear Assyrian music and everything that is "ASSYRIAN". May God bless our brave Assyrian People and NATION.

▷▶M/18/ Australia/Sydney

▶▷The question depends on which dialect - as it is often a rarity that Assyrians who speak a certain dialect listen to music sung in the other. The quality of East Assyrian music is picking up a little, with singers like David Simon, Ramsin Sheeno, Walter Aziz, Linda George and a few others whose latest CDs show bursting originality and vibrancy of musical style, though on a whole East Assyrian music isn't really that "funky". It's truly a pity that a people who



created music and the world's first musical instruments now have to rely strictly on keyboards to express themselves musically.

Western Assyrian music, however, can be likened to a colourful explosion of different string and wind instruments and singers, such as Fuat Ispir, are often accompanied by their own mini-orchestras. It does, though, have its failings but although their musical style is sometimes downgraded as Arabesque or non-Assyrian, this is really far from the truth. Old favourites like Habib Mousa and Ninib Abdalahad Lahdo are still popular as well as newer or younger singers like Babylonia, Kamil Hanna, Rapper Levant Acar and Addo Rhawi, whose latest CD "Hawri" mixes a variety of styles such as R'n'B and even dance beats and was produced by the same company that produced Ace of Bass's songs.

Today's Assyrian music, with all its failings, and with all its beauties, is just that - "today's" Assyrian music. It serves us ok now, but it won't be around in its present form for long. Just as we are constantly changing in the diaspora, so is our music. Lets hope that we'll see a change for the better in our music with a return to the use of more traditional instruments if any at all, and above all, a little more "Ooomf!"

▷▶M/27/Australia

▶▷There are the occasional flashes of brilliance, but for the most part today's Assyrian music appears to be a rather bland affair.

I wanna hear more music played on ORIGINAL instruments...you know, no more tacky electronic zoorna, please! Still, it's enjoyable stuff, the tunes are catchy, it's in Assyrian after all, and you can dance to it...hell, I guess it fulfils its purpose!

▷▶F/33/Australia

▶▷I have to admit, I haven't heard much Assyrian music outside of Assyrian parties so my view is a bit one-sided! I can only comment that it all sounds pretty much the same - I'd love to hear something a bit more innovative, different, but still very Assyrian. Maybe it's just that I don't know where to hear this sort of stuff??

# NOOSARDEL

The Mesopotamians were dependent on nature for their survival - they saw the annual renewal of fertility as a cause for celebration. In Mesopotamia certain crops which constituted the staple diet of the Mesopotamians were so important that they were personified as deities, whose cyclical pattern of death and rebirth was enshrined in myth. *Noosardel* is the name given to this Assyrian holiday. The modern holiday, based on one of the deepest and most ancient myths to have come out of ancient Mesopotamia, explains the seasons.

At its core, *Noosardel* is based on the love story of Ishtar and Tammuz. It begins in the Mesopotamian month that bears his name - *Tammuz* (July). Tammuz was the beloved of Ishtar, Queen of Heaven. In the burning days of late summer, people came to the fields where Tammuz stood, and cruelly murdered him, hacking him to death with their sickles, scattering his flesh over the land until it ran red with his blood, grinding his bones to powder and scattering it to the winds. The descent of Tammuz into the underworld is then described. Ishtar, the mother, sister and consort of Tammuz, calls upon priests and people to unite with her in universal mourning. The lament appears to be an echo of the 'word' or cry of Tammuz himself from the underworld. Grief stricken, Ishtar then descends into the underworld in search of her beloved. Here she is captured and impaled, losing consciousness. Eventually freed by *Asushu-Namir*, her body is sprinkled with the 'water of life.' Awakening as if from a deep sleep, her injuries vanish. After enduring great hardships Ishtar and Tammuz are both released and the two make a triumphant return to earth, bringing back joy and fertility.

In Mesopotamia the sacrificial rites of Tammuz were held in midsummer, the time when the corn was harvested. Being the hottest time of the year, and having just cut down the corn, the people would want some reassurance that the god of vegetation would return in the coming spring. It is clear that Tammuz is the vegetation god, dying during the midsummer

harvest and re-born with the spring flowers and the young corn in *Neesan* (April). At the mourning of his annual 'death', songs (*dirges*) were chanted over an effigy of the murdered god. The laments symbolised Tammuz, the dying god of vegetation. They were also accompanied with ritual acts. In ancient times they were conducted by weeping men and women who prayed, fasted and performed a mysterious pantomime. A wooden figure of the dying god was probably placed in a small boat and sent on a journey in the waters of the Euphrates or Tigris rivers. When the figure of the god disappeared beneath the waves it was supposed to symbolically show Tammuz descending into the underworld after his painful death. One passage in the Tammuz liturgies reads, 'The raging flood has brought him low, him that has taken his way to the lower world.'

In later times it appears as though the focus of the "wailing men and wailing women" had shifted. They no longer mourned the death of Tammuz, but the departure of Ishtar into the underworld. James Frazer suggests that the ritualistic counterpart may have included the pouring of water over an effigy of the god, the practice corresponding to the pouring of the water of life over him in order to bring him back to life. This complex ritual may well have had its origins in the form of a primitive rain dance conducted by the Mesopotamians in order to appease the gods, as well as psychologically reassure themselves that the Earth's fertility would return with the following year's *bet-neesaneh* (spring).

Little has changed over the centuries. The holiday and its central ritual, the sprinkling of water, are currently still practiced by Assyrians throughout the Middle East. Today the fasting and weeping may have vanished but the ritual of symbolically throwing water is still practiced to this day and is as popular as ever. In villages throughout the Middle East young boys and girls, in the

heat of summer, fill their buckets with water and spend the entire day drenching family and friends - any non-Assyrians caught in their path are also targeted! The same ritual is also enacted by Assyrians when someone is about to embark on a long journey - as a symbol of "luck" water is sprinkled across the traveler's path.

Traditionally, *Noosardel* is conducted during the Northern hemisphere's summer in the month of *Tammuz* (July). Unfortunately Assyrians living in the Southern hemisphere will have to find more creative ways to celebrate *Noosardel* - as it takes place in the middle of winter! ■

David Chibo





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1.meaning	9.spiritual and secular	16.means	22.individual
2.hope	depth [of meaning]	17.media	23.treasure
3.netherworld	10.difficulty	[16&17 – means of	24.always
4.religion	11.message	communication]	25.watched
5.baptism	12.unfortunately	18.radio	26.idea
6.myth	13.seasons	19.television	27.dreams
7.sign	14.opposite to	20.magazines	28.being
8.accomplish	15.celebrate	21.explain	29.special

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# John Daniel... Naturally!

**B**odybuilding! A word that, as it sparks through our memory banks, associates itself with names such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Incredible Hulk, Hercules, and many others. For those actually involved in the sport, it conjures up images of bodybuilding centres, such as those in the USA, some European countries, and Australia, on an amateur level - though the word fails to link itself with anyone in our own community. But things are set to change.

Introducing John Daniel - from our own community, he currently holds the World Mr. Natural title. John won this title in Amsterdam on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2000.

John migrated to Australia in 1972. His first hobby was playing the drums, and he was part of a band until 1985 when he slowly began to take up weight training. Initially he started training in an effort to gain some weight. "I was a very light guy," commented John. "I weighed only 50kg when I started." You see, John has a very fast metabolism - he is one of the lucky ones, he can eat and eat and not put on any weight.

John started weight training when he was around twenty years old. Prior to that, he was a very active person. "I did a lot of sports at school," he said, but the sport that captured his imagination was bodybuilding. He entered his first competition about a year after he started, and he has continually entered competitions on an annual basis. Currently he holds five Australian titles, and many other minor titles.

To some people bodybuilding is not much of a sport, they see bodybuilders as a bunch of vain individuals, who can not get enough of looking at themselves in the mirror. Firstly, all the mirrors around the gym are used to watch your own form as you engage in a particular exercise. Secondly, in discipline ranking, bodybuilding is not very far from martial arts training. In a documentary about

bodybuilding titled *Pumping Iron*,

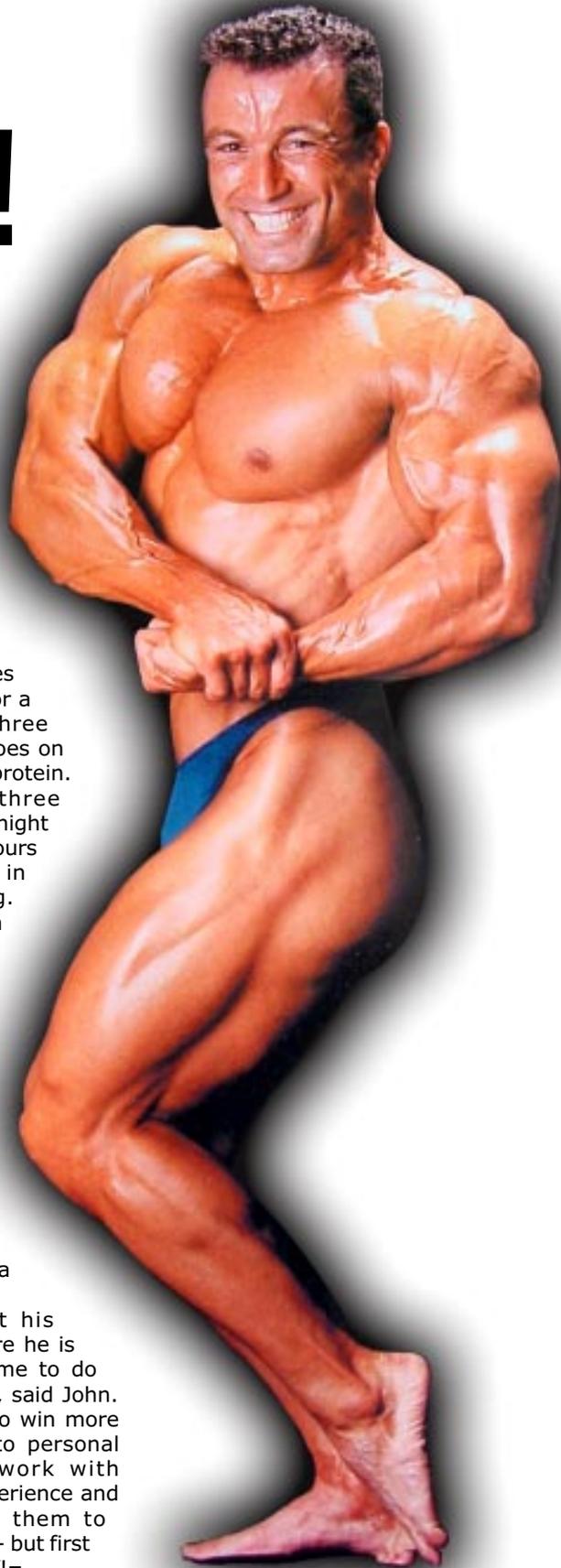
Arnold Schwarzenegger likens himself to a sculptor. "I look at myself in a mirror, and if my shoulders look out of proportion from the rest of my body, I do extra training for that particular body part," he says.

John's off-season body weight is 80kg, and he carries 9.5% body fat. Preparation for a competition starts about three months before the day. He goes on a no fat diet that is high in protein. His training is split into three sessions - in the morning and night he is in the gym, and for two hours during the day he engages in some cardiovascular training. For the Mr. Natural title, John competed with a body weight of 70kg, and 5% body fat.

John's love of music and dancing helped him put together a great routine for the competition. The music he used was the theme from the movie *Gladiator*. With help from his brother, the music was prepared for the routine, and all the display moves were choreographed to create a theme that fit the music.

John never thought that his training would take him where he is now. "The gym owner told me to do bodybuilding...but I laughed", said John. His plans for the future are to win more world titles, and expand into personal training. John wants to work with bodybuilders, sharing his experience and knowledge, and help train them to become the next Mr. Universe - but first he wants that title for himself! ■

*Sennacherib Warda*



## Home reach

If you are frail and aged, someone with a disability or a carer, you will find a lot of very useful information in the *Homereach* series on SBS radio. *Homereach* is an attempt to increase the awareness of people from a non-English speaking background on the wide range of services that will enable them to continue living in their own homes - rather than prematurely moving to a nursing home or residential care facility. The *Homereach* series, presented by Wilson Younan, can be heard on the Assyrian language programme on SBS radio, Fridays, 8pm.