

HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY INAUGURATES ITS NEW HERITAGE BUILDING

Beirut, May 3, 2010 - On April 29, 2010, Haigazian University held the inaugural ceremony of the Heritage Building as a proud culmination of five years of fundraising, planning, construction and hard work.

This building, whose construction notably took three years of dedicated effort that preserved the Lebanese architectural heritage of the exterior, will serve a dual administrative and academic purpose with its 6 floors, including offices as well as classrooms.

The Heritage Building originally built around 1930 does not only serve as a valuable addition to an educational institution, but also stands as an effort by Haigazian University to preserve the Lebanese cultural heritage in general and of the traditional and prestigious neighborhood of Kantari in particular. With this addition, Haigazian University now possesses two buildings of Lebanese architectural heritage as classified by the Ministry of Culture.

This grand event was conducted under the High Patronage of the President of the Council of Ministers, H.E. Mr. Saad Hariri, represented by the Minister of Culture, Mr. Salim Wardé. Also in attendance at this impressive occasion were Minister of State Jean Oghasabian, members of Parliament Walid Joumblat, Hagop Pakradounian, Tamam Salam, Arthur Nazarian, Serge Toursarkissian, and Shant Chinchinian. Representatives of the Commanders of the Army, General Security and Internal Security were also present, in addition to the Armenian Ambassador to Lebanon, Mr. Ashod Kotcharian, President of the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Community in Syria and Lebanon, Rev. Salim Sahyouni, President of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, Rev. Megrdoch Kargeozian, Bishops Kegham Khatcherian and Vartan Ashkarian, previous ministers and members of parliament, community leaders and dignitaries, in addition to Haigazian faculty, staff and students. The HU Board of Trustees, twelve of whom came with their spouses from the USA, were among the distinguished guests at the inauguration, which coincided with the annual HU Board of Trustees meeting in Beirut that took place from April 30 to May 1.

Following a musical prelude of classical pieces skillfully performed by four Haigazian University students, the official ceremony kicked off with a live performance of the national anthem presented by Nare Havatian, Karoun Bardakjian, Talar Mandoyan and Sarine Karajian. The introduction and welcoming address was given by Dr. Ani Darakjian, the Chair of the HU Board of Trustees, who extended a warm welcome to all. "With its traditional Lebanese architecture, the Heritage Building will be a valuable addition to Haigazian University" said Darakjian. She concluded by accentuating the great role this university plays in shaping future leaders of society.

Rev. Meguerdich Karageozian offered the Prayer of Dedication, asking God to bless all those who will enter this building. "This building is dedicated to be the home of Truth, Freedom and Service," Karageozian concluded, emphasizing the university motto.

After a riveting performance of "The Prayer," beautifully sung as a duet by Haigazian graduate Joyce Saddi and Ricardo Daou, President of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, Dr. Hrair S. Aharonian brought his greetings from the AMAA, as one of the two main sponsors of the project. Aharonian shared experiences about his childhood in this neighborhood, adding that the Heritage Building has "never looked as beautiful as it does today."

Aharonian reminded the audience of the purpose that this building would serve as a means to ensure growth of the university and expansion of its graduate school. He ended with a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt: “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

A congratulatory note was then given by Mr. Walid Joumblat, Member of Parliament, who was introduced as a neighbor of HU. Joumblat praised the university, declaring that “where various municipalities have failed to preserve the heritage of Beirut, Haigazian has succeeded,” leading the audience to roar with applause.

In the festive spirit of the occasion, the Haigazian University Dance Club performed the traditional Lebanese Heritage Dance, more commonly known as *Dabke*, to the tune of “Lebanon will Return” by Joseph Attiyeh.

In his President’s Address, Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian opened with a quote from the Bible (Psalm 118: 24) and introduced the Heritage Building as “our gift for the 55th anniversary of Haigazian University.” Haidostian then proceeded to speak of the close association between Mexique Street and HU for the past 55 years and how we would now be also linked to May Ziadeh Street. He referred to the connection that the university has with the area and placed the street names in historical context. Haidostian added that the Heritage Building would be fully operational in September and thanked all those who worked hard to make this building possible, highlighting the fact that with three years of work and hundreds of laborers there was only one minor injury. Before inviting the Minister of Culture to give his message, Haidostian concluded saying, “Haigazian University stands in awe and praise before the Lord, and thanks all the donors, Board members, friends, volunteers, technicians and staff who have transformed stones and dust into a magnificent home-like university building.”

Minister of Culture Salim Wardé addressed the audience on behalf of H.E. Mr. Saad Hariri to express his gratitude and congratulations. He then praised the role Haigazian University played in preserving this Heritage Building, informing the audience of the upcoming strategy of the Ministry of Culture in setting strict rules to preserve the heritage aspect of the city of Beirut.

Dr. Ani Darakjian then invited Mr. Salim Wardé, Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, Rev. Meguerdich Karageozian and Dr. Hrair Aharonian to cut the ribbon, thus officially inaugurating the building.

The audience was then invited to enter the building to attend the unveiling of the plaque that revealed Sirpuhe Philiposian Conte Hall as the name of the multipurpose hall. Mrs. Joyce Stein, daughter of Sirpuhe, emotionally expressed the vision of her parents and their sustained love and support of Haigazian University.

After touring the building from the inside and the beautiful floor tiles that were preserved from the original structure, everyone had the chance to view an outdoor exhibition featuring pictures and descriptions of old Lebanese heritage buildings and the defining characteristics of their architecture, taken from a book by Mr. Robert Saliba.

The program concluded with a reception accompanied by live music by another Haigazian graduate, the talented Shahan Kilaghbian on the keyboard.

In addition, for this special occasion a booklet was published featuring a brief history of Haigazian University and its most recent acquisition, the Heritage Building, as well as pictures of the construction work in progress and a list of all those who generously donated to this project. In addition, Haigazian University received many congratulatory notes from many friends from around the world, including from the Armenian Minister of the Diaspora, Mrs. Hranoush Hagopian which said “Glory and honor to all donors, to authorities and staff of the University for their contributions to the enlargement, development and strengthening of this Armenian institution notwithstanding these difficult times of economy and globalization... Haigazian University has a high reputation in the Republic of Lebanon and its distinguished place in the country’s educational system.”

The refurbishment of the Haigazian University Heritage Building was conducted by:

- *IDEA Consultants S.A.R.L. as Architects and lead consultant*
- *DG Jones & Partners (M.E) LTD as Project Manager*
- *Building Construction & Contracting Co. as Contractor*

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