



# The Magic Carpet Ride: my life so far

*Mr. Souren Baronian*

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## **The Magic Carpet Ride: my life so far** Mr. Souren Baronian

The Magic Carpet Ride is the autobiography of a man who has been on a highly unusual musical and life odyssey for the last 80 plus years. Born in East Harlem in 1930 to Armenian parents who had fled the genocide, Souren Baronian grew up surrounded by traditional Armenian and Middle Eastern and Balkan music at home and got swept up in the golden age of jazz all around him, awed by Lester Young and Billie Holiday and Charlie Parker and company that he snuck into the 52nd Street clubs to see. After his return from being in the army in Korea (a wild episode), he began intensive studies with several master teachers, especially the legendary Lennie Tristano on the jazz side and the no less remarkable Turkish clarinetist Safet Gundeger on the Middle Eastern side, and Souren eventually grew into a master musician in both idioms and later produced perhaps the earliest and later, with his band Taksim, the most accomplished, authentic, organic "fusion" of these genres. Over the decades he has performed with all sorts of musical luminaries live and on countless records, has played thousands of gigs in every possible setting imaginable on several continents, from fancy ballrooms to smoky clubs, dives to chateaus, formal concerts backed by symphony orchestras to jamming on street corners. He has traveled extensively including to some extremely remote places, and met all sorts of people. His story will of course be of great interest to those with an interest in jazz and/or Middle Eastern and Balkan music and the history of their trajectories in the U.S., as well as to anyone interested in descriptions of life in New York neighborhoods and the socio-cultural changes in the city over the decades in the last 80 years, or those interested in exotic travel stories, but beyond those fascinating topics, this book will appeal to anyone who admires a zest for life, because there is unlikely to be anyone on this planet as filled with joie de vivre and as positive an attitude as Souren Baronian, a spiritual cousin to Zorba the Greek. This man is still as vigorous and as productive in his 80s as he was decades ago, and he keeps evolving musically. He may be the best role-model for the fully lived life. His example is infectious, and his story is deliciously entertaining.

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