

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

## Order to Increase Social Workers' Salary Has Been Approved, Yet Strike Continues

The Social Services Agency has approved a new order on increased salaries for social agents and senior social agents. According to the approved document, the fixed salary of a social agent is increased to 60%. In particular, their salary will be ₾ 400 instead of ₾ 250, and the salary of a senior social agent - ₾ 700 instead of ₾ 550. Also, within the framework of family visits, social agents will receive ₾ 10 instead of ₾ 6 for one completed declaration. Also, the salaries of low and middle-level employees of the Social Service Agency will increase from 40% to 60%.

According to the press service of the Ministry of Health, the document on the decision has already been sent to the employees for information. The increased salaries will affect a total of 998 people employed by the Social Service Agency from February 1, 2022. This information was released to the media on 18th of January. Recall, social service agents have been holding a rally since January 17 demanding a pay rise.

The lawyers of the agents, Davit Omsarashvili, a representative of the 'Solidarity Network', say that the decision of the Ministry of Health is not acceptable and the protest action continues.

"The protest continues, the position is the same as we had at the beginning of the protest

rally. Social agents are demanding a 100% pay rise. About 400 people remain on strike. They are not working and it will continue until the decision-maker or the minister meets with them," the lawyer said.

Social Agent Tea Narimanishvili says there has been no communication with agents and decisions were made unilaterally. We demand a 100% increase in fixed and output-based salaries, as well as reimbursement of travel expenses and maternity leave. Whatever requests we had remained unanswered. In case of a normal salary, a 40-60% increase may be good, but when a person has a salary of ₾ 360, it is nothing for him," Narimanishvili said.

Minister of Health Zurab Azarashvili states that the employees of the Social Service Agency have appropriate remuneration for their activities. He informed that the salary of social agents has been under consideration for several months.

"Due to their functions and workload and the working day, we think we made the appropriate decision last week and in some cases there is a 60% salary increase. In addition to salary, they can earn income for each completed declaration. In



The agency management promises a 60% increase in fixed and output-based remunerations from next month, although this promise is not enough for the strikers.

total, they can receive almost twice as much as the fixed salary, including compensation. Therefore, we think that this salary is adequate for today's reality due to their workload," Azarashvili commented.

According to the Deputy Minister of Health, Tamar Barkalaia, despite the strike of about 400 employees, the service centers of the service agency are

working smoothly and this process will continue during the negotiations with the striking employees.

Regarding this topic, Lelo opposition party MP Badri Japaridze expressed his party's readiness to start consultations on convening an extraordinary sitting of the Parliament to hear why this crisis has arisen.

"I declare with full responsi-

bility that if the Georgian Dream supports the appointment of an extraordinary sitting, I do not doubt for a moment that all opposition MPs will come there, because it is about our fellow citizens and the crisis that has arisen in the social sphere." He announced, accusing the GD government of incompetent management.

## 1200 omicron cases confirmed in Georgia, Govt reduces Covid isolation period



According to the statistics, 50% of Covid cases in the country are Omicron strain.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

More than 1200 Omicron cases have been confirmed in Georgia, out of which only 14 patients required hospitalization, said Tamar Gabunia, Deputy Health Minister. According to her, the majority of those infected with Omicron were vaccinated and they also had a booster shot.

As the Head of the National Center for Diseases Control and

Public Health (NCDC) Amiran Gamkrelidze said, the Omicron version is characterized by rapid transmission and tripled reinfection rate, noting that out of 1254 confirmed omicron cases, approximately 17-20% are re-infected. According to him, 50% of positive cases in the country are Omicron strain and the highest number, 65%, is recorded in Tbilisi. Gamkrelidze stated that the cases of the new strain are relatively mild compared to



According to the Head of NCDC Amiran Gamkrelidze, it is expected to enter another peak of the pandemic at the end of February with 10-15 thousand positive cases per day.

Delta, however, it should not be a reason to loosen up as it can also lead to complications. He called on the population to take the third booster dose, because studies show that the booster works effectively against the Omicron strain as well.

Changes to the isolation and quarantine periods come into

force in the country starting this week, according to which, the isolation and quarantine periods will be different for vaccinated, unvaccinated, and previously COVID-infected persons. Quarantine period time for asymptomatic and mild patients has been reduced to 8 days, while for moderate and severe cases, the term

is at least 10 days. In both cases, wearing a mask for the next 5 days after isolation is strongly recommended. As for the contacts, double-jabbed and boosted people do not need to be quarantined in the 90 days after their second or third dose, while COVID-19 recovered patients will be required to be isolated for 10 days. As for unvaccinated people, it remains a recommendation to stay in quarantine for 8 days after contact and to use a mask for 9-12 days. Georgian Health Minister Zurab Azarashvili does not rule out further reducing the Covid self-isolation and quarantine period from eight to five days, citing the US government's recent decision over cutting the isolation period from ten to five days.

Georgia reported 7 521 coronavirus cases, 3 160 recoveries, and 31 deaths on Tuesday. The total number of confirmed cases since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country amounts to 1,006,864. According to the Head of NCDC, it is expected to enter another peak of the pandemic at the end of February with 10-15 thousand positive cases per day, however, the mortality rate is not expected to rise dramatically.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0840; Euro - 3.5130; GBP - 4.1992; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.0371; Swiss Franc - 3.3720

# A Celebratory Evening dedicated to the Montani Brothers

(a lecture and pre-Christmas concert) Parma, Italy

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On 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2021, a celebratory evening was held to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the two brothers, Pasquale and Oreste Montani: Professor Guido Scano's lecture and pre-Christmas concert was held in the European Hall (Sala Europa) of Corno Giovine (the birthplace of the brothers in Lombardy, Italy). Taking part were the following students of the Arrigo Boito Conservatoire of Parma and Erasmus scholarship students from the Tbilisi State Conservatoire: Soprano: Maka Dvali, the pianists: Tamar Chikvaidze, Vakhtang Zaalishvili, Emanuele Maria

## Concert Programme

Oreste Montani - *Scherzino* (Emanuele Maria Scacchi)

Pietro Montani - *Two Studies* (Pietro Concoreggi)

Pietro Montani - From L'arca di Noe, no. 1, *Capriccio del cucu* (Whim of the Cuckoo) and *Burlesca* (Tamar Chikvaidze)

Pietro Montani - From L'arca di Noe, no.2, *In morte di una lucciola* (*On the death of a Firefly*),

*Prelude no.3*, from the 24 preludes, and *Romance* (Vakhtang Zaalishvili)

Pietro Montani - L'arca di Noe, no.3, *Quel rosignuol che si soave piagne* (*The Nightingale which sweetly sobs*) (Prof. Guido Scano)

Pietro Montani - *Allora* (For

Chikvaidze (accompaniment) were honored to perform a Georgian composition ("Let us in, gardener" - the work of the composer, Nodar Gabunia) which was well received.

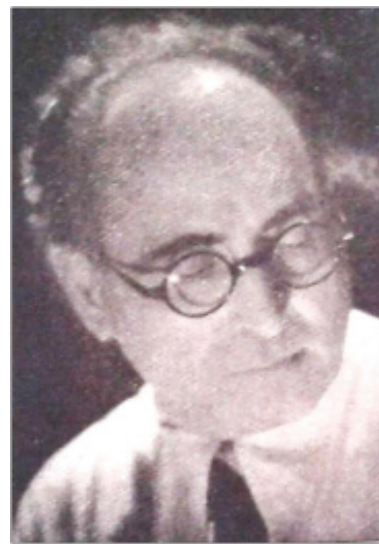
The concert was a memorable and interesting concert for the enthusiastic Italian audience, proving that high-quality events can still take place despite the covid situation. The performers were delighted: They were filled with feelings of gratitude and gave their thanks to the Parma Conservatoire as well as to the Tbilisi State Conservatoire.

The event was reported in the local newspapers: *il Cittadino* (Cultura & Spettacoli), *il Giorno* and *La Liberta*.

## Brief biographical information about the composer brothers follows:

PIETRO MONTANI

Pietro Montani was born in



Pietro Montani

the piano department in Florence at the Cherubini Conservatoire. He remained there for 12 years, and from 1932 worked at the piano department of Milan Conservatoire for almost 40 years, until 1965. In addition to his teaching work, he enjoyed a busy concert schedule until about 1939. In the years 1945 to 1946 he worked in the music section of Radio in Florence, organizing numerous concerts of symphonic and chamber music. He directed radio shows and published critical reviews of piano interpretations. At the end of World War II he began a close collaboration with Ricordi, the Italian music publishers.

From 1951 to 1957 he was chief-editor of *Ricordiana*, a monthly magazine about musical life. Many of his writings (under the pseudonym, *Phantasius*) were devoted to the importance of musical education that is "alleviated by critical intellectualism". From 1965 until the end of his life he was President of the Bologna Philharmonic Academy.

During his multifaceted career, he won many awards for artistic activities: In 1922 he was awarded the Zanella Prize for Poemetto Campestre (solo piano), The Palermo Symphony Concerts Association Prize for his "Humorous Suite" (1924), the B. Christophorus Prize for his piano etudes, "Studi Caratteristici" (solo piano, 1931). In addition he was awarded (among others) the following prestigious awards: A medal for his contribution to culture and art, and the Antico Fattore Prize from the Georgofili Academy of Florence.

His passion was writing and publishing instrumental works. He rejected the avant garde and Neo-classical trends. Instead he made the decision to move in an anachronistic direction, forming a

bridge with the piano music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His main aim was to create a body of work for young pianists in order to assist them overcome technical difficulties.

Pietro died in Milan in 1967.

PASQUALE MONTANI

Pasquale (1885-1971) studied piano at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatoire in Milan.

He also learnt organ at the Bologna Lyceum of Music and composition at the Pesaro Lyceum of Music. In 1918-1921 he was director of the Giuseppe Verdi Music Academy in Genoa, and then he became a piano teacher and the principal at the Nicolo Paganini Lyceum of Music.

GIUSEPPE MONTANI

Giuseppe (1888-1964) studied



at the Music Lyceum in Bologna. He was an organist and choral singing school principal in Vigevano.

ORESTE MONTANI

After studying with his



brother Pasquale in Bologna, Oreste (1900-1971) became a choral singing teacher and later school principal.



Scacchi, Pietro Concoreggi, and the event organizer himself, the famous concert pianist, Prof. Guido Scano (founder of the Montani Prize for young talented pianists in 2014).

vocal and piano) (Maka Dvali and Vakhtang Zaalishvili)

As an encore, Maka Dvali and Tamar Chikvaidze paid tribute to the Georgian composer Nodar Gabunia, performing his composition, "Let us know", which was much enjoyed by the audience.

In addition, further Georgian music was also performed during the evening: Singer Maka Dvali and pianist Tamar

1895 in Corno Giovine, Italy, into a musical family. He had three brothers, who were also musicians.

He began to study under the guidance of his father, and his brother, Pasquale. He was taught composition at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatoire (Milan) and studied also at Milan University. Upon completing his studies the young man gave a successful debut concert which led to a brilliant career. In 1920 he became head of

## Weather

Wednesday, January 19

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 4°C

Night Overcast

Low: -1°C

Thursday, January 20

Day Cloudy

High: 3°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: -3°C

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