Voyage to Amasia documents composer Eric Hachikian’s return to his ancestral home - Amasia, Turkey - nearly 100 years after Ottoman soldiers deported his grandmother, Helen Shushan, and her family during the Armenian Genocide. Eric first learned about Amasia from his grandmother, who told him she hoped to take him there someday. She only really knew about Amasia, though, from pictures and stories passed down by her own mother, because Helen was forty days old when her family was exiled and forced to walk south towards the Syrian Desert.

Eric’s family’s deportation from Amasia was just one of many Armenian death-marches happening across Turkey during this time. Using World War I as a cover, the Ottoman government systematically deported and executed its Armenian citizens, and historians estimate that 1-1.5 million Armenians died between 1915 and 1923. It was the first genocide of the 20th century.

Helen always longed to return to Amasia but never did. When she died in 2004, Eric wrote a traditional four-movement piano trio entitled “Voyage to Amasia.” The piece uses Armenian melodies to commemorate Helen’s life and imagine a journey with her to Amasia—a trip she and Eric were never able to make together.

Voyage to Amasia is set to Eric’s piano trio, which provided the initial inspiration for the documentary. When “Voyage to Amasia” premiered at Carnegie Hall in 2005, Eric convinced his friend, filmmaker Randy Bell, to make a real voyage to Amasia with him.

The filmmakers spent nearly a month following the route of Eric's family's exile march from Amasia to Malatya and, ultimately, to Istanbul. They also visited modern-day Armenia, exploring Yerevan and a village in Armenia settled by exiles from Amasia.

The film traces a path through the past, honoring Eric's relationship with his grandmother and uncovering what her family's life in Turkey might have been like. It also explores how the events of nearly a century ago continue to strain the relationship between Armenians and Turks today. Inspired by one family’s story, the filmmakers embark on their own journey in the hopes of finding a greater understanding between two peoples still at odds.

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The film won Best Documentary at the Pomegranate Film Festival in 2011. It has screened at numerous film festivals across the country and internationally. It will also be screening at the St. Louis Film Festival on Nov 17th and at the 15th Annual ARPA International Film Festival in Los Angeles the weekend after Thanksgiving.