



To A Life of a Singer-Songwriter: Hagos Gebrehiwet

The news of Hagos Gebrehiwet's untimely death on August 13, 2020 has sent shock waves throughout the nation and among his community and supporters.

Artist Hagos Gebrehiwet is survived by his loving and wonderful wife of more than 30 years Weizero Hirut Arage and his three children: Bereket, Halewat and Ezana.

Hagos Gebrehiwet was a much loved, admired, and respected singer, songwriter, and composer of Tigrigna music. His colorful and melodic Tigrigna songs have been widely admired and revered in the Tegar community.

Those in the profession of music fervently believe that a large part of being a successful singer is the ability to "put over a song." To accomplish this, the singer must be able to connect to the music emotionally and to convey that emotion to the audience, in addition to being a craftsman who irons out the musical kinks. A good singer doesn't just have a good voice; he is one who always understands the meaning and purpose of the song and is committed to signing it to those for whom it is meaningful. Hagos Gebrehiwet was a great singer.

Growing up in the country side of Tigray and then being conscripted to join the Ethiopian Army during the Somalia's invasion of 1977, where he served heroically, Hagos was able to channel his musicianship and to make songs that demonstrated his deep understanding of the power of music in effecting change.

As an artist, Hagos was a very talented and passionate singer, song writer and composer with deep knowledge and strong love for culture, tradition, and history. Whether he was singing traditional songs, modern, wedding or love songs, he conveyed the life and situation of his people and his country as he saw them. He was authentic, uplifting, and storyteller of our culture, history and the bravery of our society.

As a singer, Hagos had a great vocal talent with a signature sound and as a person he had a great attitude and professional ethic. He was a fast learner, which helped him to keep pace with changing and evolving music and entertainment business in Ethiopia. Hagos was known for his lyrics and kirar and his songs included love songs, social commentaries (in the form of ማህ Masse a popular folk style in Eastern Tigray), and traditional songs.

Hagos the Person of Conscience

Artist Hagos was also a voice to his people, whether in time of war or peace. Through his music, he was echoing the joy and pain of the Tigray people, while being an advocate for the people of Tigray. Through his art, he exposed the nepotism, corruption, maladministration and lack of opportunities in Tigray. *Ido* (ኢዶኦ) was one of the songs he produced to show his disappointment about the maladministration, lack of opportunities in Tigray and the split of TPLF and its consequences. To take some of the lyrics of *Ido*, here is how he put the situation at the time:

ረሲያምዎ ዶታ ዝኹሉ መስዋእቲ

ረሲያምዎ ዶታ ዝኹሉ መስዋእቲ

የማን ፀጋም ክብሉ ላዕሊ ታሕቲ

የማን ፀጋም ክብሉ ላዕሊ ታሕቲ

ፋሕ ጭንግራሕ ክብሉ ከም ደቂ ዛርቲ

ኣሕሊፎም ክብሉ ንፀላእቲ

ዘይተርፎም ኩሎም ተሓተቲ

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እስቲ ሕደጊ ጥዕምቲ ኸራረይ ኣይተላዕልኒ

ባዕላይ እፈልጦ እየ ብዙሕ ከምዝብሉኒ

እዳነይ ቅበጽኒ [ማሕቡስ] ከይተዳጉንኒ

ከምታ ናይ ትማሊ ከይተዳጉንኒ፤

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ዘይበጽሓኒ የለን ዘይጓነፈኒ

ኣይሞቆኒ ወትሩ ኣይቆረኒ

ዘይልወጥ ፈጣሪ እንተለኒ

ኣነውን ብሞያይ ሕድሪ ሕዝቢ ኣለኒ

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ዘይሪኣ የለን ወዲሰብ እንትቅኒ

ዘይሰምዎ የለን ወዲሰብ እንትቅኒ

ኩሉ እንትህርስ'ዶ ክህርስ ኣልክኒ

ዓዲ እንትሕመስ'ዶ ክድቅስ ኣልክኒ

ጌጋ እንተውዲላይ ሕዝቢ ይፍረደኒ

መል እኸቲ ጥበቢይ እዚኣ ትመስለኒ

ተግባር ጥራት እዩ ንሱብ መዕቀኒ

ቃለይ ሂብ'ለኹ ደጊም ይኣኸለኒ፤

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Hagos always spoke his mind and he was not intimidated by power or money, and ultimately he paid a price for it.

Some powerful politicians did not like his independent mind and made sure he did not get access to government and parastatal-controlled TV and radio outlets for almost 20 years. He was ostracized in his community through vicious campaigns of defamation and ordinary citizens were discouraged from doing business with him. They also put pressure on his business clients to cancel their contracts with him, which denied him the opportunity of making a living and an income to support his family.

Hagos got through all those tough times because of the continued love and support of his fans and family. Hagos's music continues to reach the younger generation and his popularity and recognition is always on the rise. His authentic music and poetic lyrics are still in the top choice for weddings and parties. We all believe that his music will continue to play and remind us of his independence, courage, loyalty and passion for the culture and language of the people of Tigray and Ethiopia.

Hagos the Mentor Father

Hagos was a very loving husband and a role model for his three children, Halewat, Ezana, and Bereket, who have followed their father's footsteps by joining the music profession. Each one of his children plays various instruments. Recently, the trio formed a family band when Halewat auditioned a single album *Enishesheg* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEpnCaO3z1s> a joint work with her two brothers Ezana and Bereket is a timely song about the importance of social distancing in fighting the current pandemic of COVID-19. Halewat is now among the young popular singers in Amharic and Tigrigna. Single album of Her recent *አነ ዳልያቱ* is another soft Tigrigna song she produced less than a year ago. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBXmtTeIDDQ>. Bereket and Ezana play Guitar and piano.

Hagos's songs reflected his cultural value and love for his community. Just before his untimely death, he was speaking out about the need to take COVID-19 seriously.

Artist Hagos has published 9 albums, including a wedding album, holiday songs like መስቀለይ and many more in his collection of traditional and modern love songs that includes ኢይትርሓቸኒ ካብዛ ዓይነይ, which is very much loved by his audience.

Artist Hagos also has passed the torch to his three children who are Tigrigna and Amharic singers and musicians. Hagos has written his biography that will be published very soon. No doubt his biography will inspire many more Tegararu to pursue their own music dreams.

Hagos the hero and the family man <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAJY2hxpPKo>

Hagos Gebrehiwet at his core was a very loving husband to his wife of 30 plus years. He lived for his family, friends, and country.

He was born in 1958 in Sdeyto, a village in Gulemekada in Agame Awraja, Tigray from his father Haleka GebreHiwet WoldeSellase and mother Weizero Zewiditu Teferre.

While Hagos was attending Agazi elementary school in Adigrat, he was drafted to military as Ethiopia went to war with Somalia in the late 1970s. On his team Hagos was known for his bravery and skill in operating his weapon, for which he was promoted to the heavy artillery regiment.

Hagos loved singing while in the Army and all he wanted was to be a singer more than anything. At the victorious conclusion of the war against Somalia, when he was presented to the then Commander of the Eastern Division of the Army, General Mulatu Negash, for promotion for the valor and heroic achievements he exhibited during the Ethio-Somalia war, what he asked in return was a Kirar and a transfer to Eastern Division Army Band so that he can be what he liked most, to be a singer. The general was surprised by Hagos's decision to forego a rank in the army to become a singer. Knowing his choice, General Mulat took Hagos with him in his helicopter to Harar to join the army band. While in Harar, he met and married his wife Hirut Arage.

After his time in Harar, he moved to Addis Ababa to explore more opportunities. While in Addis Ababa, Hagos worked with several famous bands such as Roha band and Hager Fikir theater. Hagos Gebrehiwet was a contemporary and personal friend of the great Tigrigna singer Kiros Alemayehu. Throughout his music life, he tirelessly worked for the renaissance of Tigrigna and Irob music. Hagos was a patriotic artist who sang and celebrated our heroes and heroines.

To quote a famous adage "*When someone you love becomes a memory, the memory becomes a treasure*".

Our deepest condolences to the family, friends, music fraternity, and his fans upon this time of bereavement, and may God bring you the much needed peace and comfort till we meet again.

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