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GHCD 2427

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© 2015 Guild GmbH**Aram KHACHATURIAN (1903-1978)****Violin Concerto in D minor**

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|---|---|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro con fermezza (Cadenza by David Oistrakh) | 15:42 |
| 2 | II. Andante sostenuto | 12:04 |
| 3 | III. Allegro vivace | 10:15 |

RUGGIERO RICCI violin
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
ANATOLE FISTOULARI

Recorded: 2-3 July 1956 (Decca Eclipse ECS641 – Stereo)

Piano Concerto in D flat major

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|---|------------------------|-------|
| 4 | I. Allegro maestoso | 14:16 |
| 5 | II. Andante con anima | 10:47 |
| 6 | III. Allegro brillante | 7:46 |

DAME MOURA LYMPANY piano
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
ANATOLE FISTOULARI

Recorded: 30 October & 1 November 1952 (Decca LXT 2767)

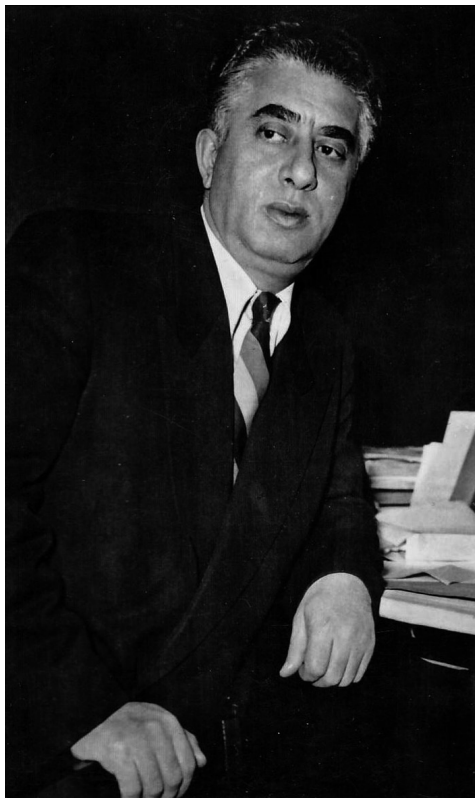
Three Dances from 'Gayaneh'

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|---|-------------------------------|------|
| 7 | I. Sabre Dance | 2:28 |
| 8 | II. Dance of the Rose Maidens | 2:14 |
| 9 | III. Lezhinka | 2:44 |

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ANATOLE FISTOULARI

Recorded: 2 November 1959 (Everest SDBR 3052 – Stereo)

**Guild**
HISTORICAL**ANATOLE
FISTOULARI****KHACHATURIAN****Violin Concerto
Piano Concerto
Three Dances
from 'Gayaneh'****RUGGIERO RICCI
MOURA LYMPANY****LONDON PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA
LONDON SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA***Stereo and Mono recordings
1952-1959*



ARAM KHACHATURIAN

A GUILD HISTORICAL RELEASE

- Recordings from the collection of Robert Matthew-Walker
- Remastering: Peter Reynolds
- Final master preparation: Reynolds Mastering, Colchester, England
- Design: Paul Brooks, paulmbrooks@virginmedia.com
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movement, before the principal subject returns to hasten the work to its exciting and breathless conclusion.

In the three-and-a-half years between the premieres of Khachaturian's concertos for piano and violin, he had visited Armenia, the land of his forefathers, for the first time, in preparation for the 1939 Moscow Festival of Armenian Music, for which he composed his first ballet, 'Happiness', and which was premiered at the Festival. But his visit to Armenia brought second thoughts for him: a closer acquaintance with Armenian folk music led him to withdraw the ballet and rewrite much of it, incorporating more ethnic ideas and expanding the score to make an entire evening in the theatre.

The new ballet was entitled 'Gayaneh'. It appeared in 1942 and carried further those elements of genuine Armenian folk-music which are also heard in the Violin Concerto – especially in that work's slow movement. These elements include scalic patterns, modal bases, and the unique Armenian hymnody (sharakans) of richly-ornamented melismata, though the most immediately impacting music from 'Gayaneh' almost didn't make it into the score. This is the 'Sabre Dance' written in a single evening, the night before the opening, 'to enliven proceedings' as Khachaturian later said. Quite remarkably, the 'Sabre Dance' entered the American pop music charts five times in the late 1940s, in vocal and instrumental versions, and once in the British single charts in the 1960s in a version by the rock group Love Sculpture, making Khachaturian the only living classical composer for many years to achieve success in popular chart music.

However, the new ballet with a new libretto, was succinctly outlined by Dmitri Kabalevsky in the Soviet magazine *Voks* in May 1943: 'This ballet, in simple and natural form, tells the story of how Gayaneh – a lovely Armenian girl, suffering at the hands of her brutal husband Giko, who is antagonistic to the Soviet system – finally rids herself of his power over her, well-nigh perishing at his vengeful hand, and of how she comes to a new and happy life.'

'Gayaneh' was extensively revised in 1957. Many of the individual dances were untouched in the revision, including the three here, from the first Suite which Khachaturian extracted from the ballet. 'The Dance of the Rose Maidens' is followed by the 'Lezghinka', the national dance for a betrothed couple – first the man dances, then the woman, then together – heard after Gayaneh has rid herself of Giko and found her new love in the handsome Armen.

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Aram Khachaturian was born on June 6th 1903 in Tiflis (Tbilisi), the capital of Georgia, the third of four sons. Their father was a bookseller, determined that his sons should follow professional careers. To this end, one of Aram's older brothers, Saren, left Tiflis for Moscow in 1910, where he joined the Moscow Arts Theatre. Following the 1917 Revolution, Saren return to Tiflis at the request of the artistic commune to which he belonged, hoping to bring other artists to Moscow. Aram, then 18, on his brother's prompting enrolled in 1922 in the biology department of Moscow University. At the same time, taking advantage of the freer acceptance of students for higher education following the Revolution he applied for entrance to the city's Gnessin Music School, requesting to study the cello, an instrument he had never played. Surprisingly, he was accepted, principally because there were so few pupils who took the instrument, and so Aram found himself a student at both academies.

He was at that time musically almost entirely self-taught. More musically than scientifically inclined, it was no surprise when he left the University after two and a half years, having decided to make music his principal study. However, here was a problem that took some time to resolve – his Armenian descent.

Geographically, Georgia abuts Armenia, and in 1918 the Georgians had achieved a measure of independence, which led to significant anti-Armenian feeling, making it a sensitive subject for the young composer to acknowledge his heritage. For several years, he called himself Khachaturov – it was not until the early 1930s that he reverted to Khachaturian when the political troubles of the region were resolved. By then, Aram had begun to make his mark as a composer with a Trio and orchestral Dance Suite of 1932, his First Symphony of 1932-33 and – above all – the Piano Concerto of 1935. The Symphony was effectively Khachaturian's graduation work from the Moscow Conservatoire, to which he had transferred after several years at the Gnessin School, where his principal teacher in composition was Miaskovsky. The premiere of the First Symphony, a fine work, dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the founding of Soviet Armenia, was given on April 23, 1935 by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by the Austrian-born Eugen Szenkov (who had left Germany in 1933: he emigrated to the USA in 1938).

Khachaturian's early works evince a distinctive compositional style of which the more striking characteristics are a florid melodic expression, a highly-developed sense of orchestral colour and a penchant for ostinato in large-scale construction: these elements are found in Transcaucasian folk-music, the region encompassing Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, as we shall see, Khachaturian did not visit Armenia for the first time until 1939. Following the immediate success of his Piano Concerto in 1937, two works which came after his first encounter with the country of his forefathers – the Violin Concerto of 1940

and the ballet 'Gayaneh' of 1942 – exhibit equally strong musical characteristics which can be identified as Armenian, particularly strong melodic cells which cover a relatively tiny range, often confined to within the interval of a minor third.

Khachaturian's Symphony had made a notable impression at its premiere, by which time he had conceived ideas for the Piano Concerto. Much later, he recalled 'When I was working on my Concerto I dreamed of hearing it played by Lev Oborin. My dream came true in the summer of 1937; the wonderful performance by this outstanding pianist ensured its success. That performance was the first time the work had been heard with orchestra. Khachaturian had played it in a two-piano version on July 5 1937 with Oborin (to whom the Concerto is dedicated); a week later, Oborin gave the official premiere in Sokolniki Park, Moscow, with the Moscow Philharmonic conducted by Lev Steinberg.

As with the Symphony, the Piano Concerto made an immediate and lasting impression. The first performance outside of the USSR was given by Moura Lympany on April 13th, 1940 at Queen's Hall in London. She recalled the occasion for the present writer in January 1993:

'Alan Bush was going to do a concert of the new Russian music in England and wanted to include the UK premiere of the Khachaturian Piano Concerto. At first, he approached Clifford Curzon, but as the concert was then only a month away, Clifford said to Alan: "Why don't you ask Moura? She learns very quickly." So he did and I did, I'm glad to say.'

In 1954, during Khachaturian's first visit to Britain, Lympany played the Concerto with the composer conducting at London's Royal Albert Hall; she had already played it many times and had recorded it twice for Decca, both with the London Philharmonic (the orchestra with whom she had played the work in April 1940), conducted by the much-admired Russian-born, long-time British resident, Anatole Fistoulari.

The Concerto begins with a peremptory orchestral gesture, ushering in the soloist whose entry in solemn octaves is a vibrant militaristic theme concentrated upon the interval of a third – both major and minor modes. The work inhabits a folk-based Caucasian world, although the essential features of Western European structures are apparent, but the strength of – and insistence upon – melodic aspects of the material, always underpinned by a rhythmic ictus, give the work its unique character, contrasted with a more intimate second subject on the oboe. The uniquely haunting slow movement includes a flexatone (which Khachaturian doubtless encountered in Shostakovich's operas *The Nose* and *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk*), which is considered

optional. Throughout, solo cadenzas imply structural references to Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto, Khachaturian's initial theme being recalled to round the work off the brilliant finale in majestic style.

Great interest was aroused in the USSR when news leaked out that Khachaturian was composing a Violin Concerto for David Oistrakh. The concert of November 16, 1940 conducted by Alexander Gauk which included its first performance was remarkable in that the programme comprised three works which were all receiving world premieres. Khachaturian's Violin Concerto followed the Twenty-First Symphony of Miaskovsky (Khachaturian's teacher), and the second half contained excerpts from Yuri Shaporin's opera 'The Decembrists'.

Khachaturian had written a cadenza for the Violin Concerto's first movement, but he suggested to Oistrakh that he might write one himself – which he did. Oistrakh's cadenza has become the standard: Khachaturian's original has apparently never been performed. For all of its 'Armenian' melodic writing, the Violin Concerto is constructed on traditional lines: three movements, with basic fast, slow, fast tempos – the last being a brilliant showpiece.

The work begins with a powerful orchestral tutti in unison, and the initial entry of the soloist brings the first main subject, extensive and rhythmic with a slower counterpoint. This idea can be considered a variant of the first soloist's theme in the Piano Concerto, which in the Violin Concerto is worked at some length, building to a splendid climax before a slower, contrasted second subject, also given to the soloist, is heard. This has a simple ostinato bass, the melody modal, imparting a quasi-Oriental feel to the music. The material having been fully treated on its first appearance the development is comparatively succinct, although incorporating the opening orchestral tutti theme. This leads to the cadenza, the succeeding recapitulation not quite straightforward, the lengthy coda utilising the first subject's anapaestic rhythm in conjunction with the orchestra's introductory theme.

The second movement, an expanded nocturne, is in complete contrast to the first. Once more, there are two main themes, both given to the soloist. The first is dreamy and languorous, modal in inflexion, and the second recalls the subsidiary theme from the first movement with a gently pulsating accompaniment from the orchestra. This leads to a massive orchestral climax, again Oriental in feeling, richly orchestrated. After this flowering, the music gently winds its way, through the soloist's line, to a reposeful end.

The finale is a collection of brilliantly infectious dances, the most important dance being a contagious theme, first heard from the soloist after the stunning orchestral tutti with which the movement opens. Binding the work together are several devices, including the recapitulation of the second theme from the *first*