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CHAN 8542



CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN

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KHACHATURIAN

CONCERTO FOR PIANO & ORCHESTRA (33:13)

- 1** I Allegro maestoso (14:11)
- 2** II Andante con anima (9:40)
- 3** III Allegro brillante (9:13)

MASQUERADE — Suite (16:17)

- 4** I Waltz (3:54)
- 5** II Nocturne (3:29)
- 6** III Mazurka (2:37)
- 7** IV Romance (3:05)
- 8** V Galop (2:57)

GAYANEH — 4 Movements from the Ballet (12:21)

- 9** I Sabre Dance (2:29)
- 10** III Dance of the Rose Maidens (2:18)
- 11** V Lullaby (4:35)
- 12** VIII Lezhinka (2:45)

TT = 62:04

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The Manoogian Foundation.

ARAM KHACHATURIAN (1903-1978)

Khachaturian could be described as a true post-Revolution Russian composer, since his father, a bookbinder in Tiflis, was too poor to take advantage of his son's obvious talent and was only able to send the boy to study in Moscow after the Revolution had broken down social barriers. Aram was sent first to the Gnessin School in 1923, six years later being admitted to the Conservatorium, working under Vassilenko and then the prodigious symphonist Nikolai Miaskovsky, a pupil of both Liadov and Rimsky-Korsakov. Khachaturian originally studied the cello, but was a natural composer, some works being published soon after studying with the Gnessins. When he graduated from the Conservatorium in 1934 it was with high honours and his First Symphony being played to acclaim by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. He was encouraged from every quarter and his work was soon being heard in the West, especially when Russia joined the Allies against the Nazis. He had a natural flair for colour and distinctive rhythms which won immediate response from lovers of popular music, while works such as the Piano Concerto and the Violin Concerto found themselves regularly played in the concert hall. A particularly spicy ingredient came from Khachaturian's uninhibited use of Armenian folksong.

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

Khachaturian's Piano Concerto was composed in 1936 and heard in London as early as 1940. Two years later it was played in the USA and was soon immensely popular with audiences and orchestras in the Western world. This is hardly surprising since the Concerto is in the grand Romantic tradition initiated by Liszt with Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov as its leading Russian proponents. Following that tradition, this concerto abounds with virtuoso passages, lush orchestration and unashamed melodies, as well as piano cadenzas of high quality, demanding unending use of the muscles and concentration on each of the soloist's eight fingers and two thumbs.

The first movement is in a loose sonata form, the vehement development taking about a sixth of the total time, although the exposition of the material includes instant discussion, as though these ideas are too full of energy to await formal examination. Out of it one theme becomes dominant, and soon the piano takes over for an extensive monologue on a second theme which is wonderfully self-indulgent both of

the instrument and the composer. The orchestra again sits silent during the soloist's exciting cadenza, after which the main theme is stated in the grand manner as a *coda*.

Atmosphere is the main ingredient of the central movement, a bass clarinet introducing an idea which becomes of importance during the piece and in the *coda*, which therefore neatly rounds off the shape. In the middle of this sandwich is the meat, a broadly based melody which has an oriental flavour as well as the stormy drama which Russian composers so superbly introduce into their slow movements.

Finally, an exciting colourful *allegro brillante* which more than lives up to its name, complete with rapid finger passages, bravura rushing around and a brilliant cadenza for the soloist, contrasting themes and, at the end, a grand return to the material of the first movement to provide unification to the Concerto.

Masquerade Suite

This is the concert suite made by the composer from the incidental music he composed for a production of Mikhail Lermontov's play *Masquerade* in 1941, the Suite being put together in 1944.

The *Waltz* has become a favourite piece for light music programmes, while the beautiful *Nocturne* includes an eloquent solo for the first violin. Gutsy rhythms dominate the *Mazurka*, the *Romance* is poignantly wistful and the final *Galop* appropriately uninhibited and joyous.

Four Movements from Gayaneh

Khachaturian's gift for musical imagery and his great sense of colour inevitably drew him towards the world of drama, and he composed memorable scores for ballet, the theatre and the cinema, of which perhaps his music for *Spartacus*, *Masquerade* and *Gayaneh* have become the most universally popular. Of these the *Sabre Dance* from *Gayaneh* has become as evergreen as Rachmaninov's C sharp minor Prelude or Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*.

The ballet was originally seen at Yerevan in 1939 under the title *Happiness*, choreographed by Ilya Arbatov. It was revised extensively for production in Leningrad by the Kirov Ballet on 20 February 1945, with choreography by Nina Anisimova.

Gayaneh is the name of the heroine, a cotton picker on a cotton co-operative in Armenia. She is married to Giko, a drunkard who maltreats her. He is eventually arrested and found guilty of being an incendiary. When this is proved and he is imprisoned, Gayaneh is able to end their marriage and marry the co-operative's chairman, Kasakov. Their wedding not only provides a happy ending, but also the excuse for a colourful divertissement, the climax of which is the *Sabre Dance*.

The *Lullaby* is expressive and haunting, while the *Dance of the Rose Maidens* is evocative of Armenian folk music and the *Lezhinka* is a colourful dance similar to a *tarantella*.

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Neeme Järvi took up his appointment as Musical Director and Principal Conductor of the Scottish National Orchestra in August 1984, since when both he and the orchestra have received great critical acclaim. Born in Tallinn, Estonia, in 1937, he graduated from Tallinn Music School with degrees in percussion and choral conducting before continuing his studies at the Leningrad State Conservatory. In 1963 he became Director of the Estonian Radio and Television Orchestra and began his 13-year tenure as Chief Conductor of the Opera Theatre Estonia.

He took up residence in North America in 1980 and almost immediately made his debut with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. He now makes frequent appearances with the San Francisco, Toronto, Montreal and Chicago Symphony Orchestras and has also appeared with the Philadelphia, Boston and Los Angeles Symphony Orchestras. His engagements at the Metropolitan Opera have included *Eugene Onegin* and a new production of Mussorgsky's *Khovantschina*. He works frequently in Europe — at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and with German and Scandinavian Orchestras — and is Chief Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in Sweden.



Photo: Paavo Järvi

Khachaturian (left) with Neeme Järvi

His extensive recordings with the SNO on Chandos include the complete Prokofiev Symphonies, a set of 6 Opera Suites by Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin's Symphony No. 2, Shostakovich's Symphonies 1 & 6, Rachmaninov's Choral Symphony *The Bells*, and a coupling of *Scheherazade* and *Stenka Razin*. Recently two major cycles have been launched: Dvořák's Symphonies with Symphonic Poems, and Richard Strauss's Tone Poems coupled with groups of his orchestrated songs, including Four Last Songs with Felicity Lott.

Constantine Orbelian was born and raised in San Francisco where he made his début with the San Francisco Symphony at 11. His Armenian father and Russian mother emigrated to the USA in 1948/9 as survivors of POW and concentration camps and he is fluent in both languages. His origins were reinforced by Armenian and Russian teachers: he gained a scholarship to study at the Moscow Conservatory with Anaida Sumbatian (noted as the teacher of Vladimir Ashkenazy) from 1972/3, and after his return to America he studied privately with Nina Svetlanova and with Nadia Reisenberg at the Juilliard School, New York.

He plays approximately 85 concerts a year, mainly in the USA, but a growing European career has included concerts in Vienna, Stockholm, Helsinki, Budapest and tours of France and West Germany. In 1984 he also toured Australia giving concerts for radio and television under the auspices of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. This is his début recording.

• **A Chandos Digital Recording**

- Recording Producer: Brian Couzens
- Sound Engineer: Ralph Couzens
- Assistant Engineer: Philip Couzens
- Recorded in the SNO Centre, Glasgow in August 1987
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- Design: Christopher Sims
- Art Direction: Janet Osborn

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KHACHATURIAN: PIANO CONCERTO etc. — Orbelian/Järvi

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CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN Piano
SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
NEEME JÄRVI Conductor



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