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KHACHATURIAN

PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS

GAYANE • SPARTACUS • MASQUERADE SUITE

MIKAEL AYRAPETYAN

ARAM KHACHATURIAN (1903–1978)

PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS GAYANE • SPARTACUS • MASQUERADE SUITE

MIKAEL AYRAPETYAN, *piano*

Catalogue Number: GP945

Recording Dates: 9 August 2023 (3–5, 8–10, 13, 16–21),
25 September 2023 (1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15)

Recording Venue: Zipper Hall, Colburn School of Performing Arts, Los Angeles, California, USA

Producer: Mikael Ayrapetyan

Engineer: Sergey Parfenov

Mixing: Andrey Borisov

Piano: Fazioli F278

Piano Technician: Sergey Parfenov

Booklet Notes: Mikael Ayrapetyan

Publishers and Editions: arr. A. Tseitlin, Sovetsky Kompozitor, Moscow, 1962 (1, 2, 6, 7);

arr. V. Sargsyan, *Aram Khachaturian: Selected Pages from Ballets 'Gayane' and 'Spartacus'* –

Concert Arrangement for Piano by W.V. Sargsyan, YSC Publishing House, 2005 (3–5, 8–10, 13, 16);

arr. E. Khachaturian, *Aram Khachaturian: Collected Works, Vol. 14 – Spartacus (for piano)*,

State Music Publishers, Moscow, 1975 (11, 12, 14, 15); Leeds Music Corporation, New York, 1948 (17–21)

Artist Photographs: Yulia Ayrapetyan and Gennady Kurbatov

Cover Photograph: Statue of Akhtamar at Lake Sevan, Tsovagyugh, Armenia by Gennady Kurbatov

GAYANE (1942) (excerpts) +

(arr. *A. Tseitlin, pub. 1962 & **Villy Sargsyan, pub. 2005)

26:24

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | Lezginka (Dance of Young Men)* | 02:34 |
| 2 | Uzundara (Dance of Nuneh and the Girls) – Gayane’s Dance* | 03:46 |
| 3 | Dance of the Maidens** | 02:48 |
| 4 | Lullaby** | 03:46 |
| 5 | Aisha’s Dance** | 03:38 |
| 6 | Dance of Nuneh and Karen* | 02:02 |
| 7 | Shalakho (Lads’ Dance)* | 02:19 |
| 8 | Dance of the Girls with Tambourines** | 02:59 |
| 9 | Sabre Dance** | 02:12 |

SPARTACUS (1950–54) (excerpts) +

(arr. ***Emin Khachaturian, pub. 1975 & **Villy Sargsyan, pub. 2005)

28:26

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 10 | Dance of the Nymphs** | 03:30 |
| 11 | Dance of the Egyptian Girl*** | 03:29 |
| 12 | Dance of the Roman Courtesans*** | 03:26 |
| 13 | Sword Dance of the Young Thracians** | 02:17 |
| 14 | Scene and Dance with Crotales*** | 03:29 |
| 15 | Aegina’s Variation and Final Bacchanal*** | 03:19 |
| 16 | Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia** | 08:37 |

MASQUERADE SUITE (1941/44)

(arr. Alexander Dolukhanian, 1946)

15:24

- | | | |
|----|--------------|-------|
| 17 | I. Waltz | 03:33 |
| 18 | II. Nocturne | 03:16 |
| 19 | III. Mazurka | 02:24 |
| 20 | IV. Romance | 02:59 |
| 21 | V. Galop | 02:57 |

+

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

TOTAL TIME: 70:19

ARAM KHACHATURIAN (1903–1978)
PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS
GAYANE • SPARTACUS • MASQUERADE SUITE

‘Together with other Armenian composers, we will make all of Europe and the whole world listen to our music. And when they hear our music, people are certain to say, “Tell us about those people, and show us the country that produces such art”.’ – Aram Khachaturian

Aram Khachaturian was a world-renowned Armenian composer, with a universal appeal that remains to this day. As one of the most popular composers of the 20th century his music is well known and includes the famous ‘Sabre Dance’ from the ballet *Gayane*, among many others.

A devoted Armenian all his life, Khachaturian played a significant role in the development of Armenian musical culture. He succeeded in organically combining Eastern and Western European musical traditions and on this basis helped to realise the rich potentialities of traditional oriental music.

Alongside Sergey Prokofiev and Dmitry Shostakovich, Khachaturian is one of the three ‘titans’ of Soviet music. His musical legacy, embracing almost all genres and forms, comprises ballets, concertos, symphonies, orchestral works, songs, film and incidental music, and pedagogical works.

The cinematic quality of his music for *Spartacus* became apparent when the ‘Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia’ was used as the theme for the popular BBC drama series, *The Onedin Line*, during the 1970s. Since then, it has become one of the most popular of all classical pieces for UK audiences. Joel Coen’s *The Hudsucker Proxy* also prominently featured music from *Spartacus* and *Gayane* (including the ‘Sabre Dance’). The ‘Adagio’ from *Gayane* was used to great effect in Stanley Kubrick’s film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and it can also be heard *Patriot Games* starring Harrison Ford, among others. He was also the composer for the state anthem of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, whose tune is one of the five current choices to become the next state anthem of Armenia. The climax of *Spartacus* was also used in *Caligula* and *Ice Age: The Meltdown*.

Aram Khachaturian was born in Kodzori, a suburb of Tiflis (now Tbilisi), Georgia, on 6 June 1903, into the Armenian family of a bookbinder. He wrote later: 'Old Tiflis is a city of sounds, a city of music. It took a stroll along the streets and lanes away from the centre, to plunge into the musical atmosphere which was created by all the various sources...'

It is important to note that at the time, there was a division of the RMC (Russian Musical Society) in Tbilisi, as well as a music school and an Italian opera theatre. The city was visited by many famous cultural representatives, including Feodor Chaliapin, Sergey Rachmaninov and Konstantin Igumnov, and many famous musicians who played an important role in the formation of the Georgian and Armenian school of composers also lived there.

All of this constituted Khachaturian's early musical experience. This multi-national musical fusion was an integral part of his formative years and became the basis of Khachaturian's music, so that it was never limited by nationality, and was always appealing to a wide-range of audiences. He had a profound respect and interest in the music of various nations. Internationalism is one of the key characteristics of Khachaturian and his music.

Despite his early demonstrated musical abilities, Khachaturian only became acquainted with music theory for the first time at the age of 19 in 1922, when he arrived in Moscow and was enrolled in a cello class at the Gnesin Music School. Simultaneously, the composer obtained a degree in biology from the Department of Physics and Mathematics at Moscow State University. During this period Khachaturian's musical development proceeded at a fast pace. Within a short period, not only did he catch up on his classwork, but he also became one of the best students, obtaining the right to perform at students' concerts in the Small and Grand Halls of Moscow Conservatory.

In 1925, the opening of a composition class at the school proved pivotal for Khachaturian. After obtaining the initial skills of composition during his time there, he was admitted to the Moscow National Conservatory in 1929, where, led by Nikolay Myaskovsky, he was formed as a composer. Sergey Prokofiev's visit to Myaskovsky's class in 1933 left an indelible mark on Khachaturian. Prokofiev's genius captivated the young composer. In turn, Prokofiev was so impressed by Khachaturian's compositions that he took them with him to Paris, where they were later performed.

Gayane

Gayane (a reworking of the 1938/39 ballet *Happiness*) with a libretto by Konstantin Derzhavin exists in at least two versions – the 1942 version which contains all the favourite numbers, and the extensively restructured 1957 version. Three hugely popular orchestral suites were also arranged by the composer. The famous 'Sabre Dance' was a late addition to the ballet – Khachaturian initially regarded this piece as something of a joke, and then an embarrassment which overshadowed his other music, including some very fine numbers from that same ballet.

In *Gayane* Khachaturian consistently applies the principle of leitmotif to each of the characters.

Lezginka is colourful and fiery with exciting cross-rhythms. It is an example of how Khachaturian develops these folk-music principles symphonically.

Gayane's Dance is a mournful, restrained monologue. Gayane's expressiveness is concentrated in a soulful and intense melody.

In *Lullaby* the opening melody of the characters bears traces of the drama from the previous scene. The theme develops in the violins, with variation, in a new, more intense harmonisation. A sudden change occurs which sounds like a dramatic monologue by Gayane.

The portrait of Aisha, a young Kurdish girl, is vividly painted in 'Aisha's Dance'. The composer combines a long, unhurried, oriental melody, with the smooth movement of a waltz, giving the music a character of soft lyricism.

'Dance of the Maidens' is distinguished by its extraordinary freshness, grace and movement.

'Sabre Dance' is associated with the tradition of showing strength, prowess and dexterity at folk festivals. The fast tempo, uniform rhythm and sharp sounds all combine to imitate sabre strokes.

Spartacus

The idea to create the ballet *Spartacus* came to Aram Khachaturian in December 1941. With this work, the composer wanted to show the heroic image of a man of ancient history, which was especially important in the context of the Second World War, to maintain the strong-willed spirit of the people in the struggle for their freedom and independence.

Spartacus was completed in 1954 and is one of his most significant compositions. It occupies a deserving place among the best ballets of the 20th century.

In 1950 Khachaturian visited Italy, where he saw the Colosseum and the Appian Way. Perhaps it was precisely with these impressions that the return to the planned ballet was connected. The work on the music lasted three and a half years – the last point in the score was set in early February 1954. The premiere of *Spartacus* took place at the Leningrad Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre (Mariinsky) on 27 December 1956, staged by one of the most original choreographers of the Soviet era, a follower of the traditions of Fokin, the famous master of choreographic miniature Leonid Yakobson (1904–1975).

The music of *Spartacus* embodies the most striking features of Khachaturian's work: catchy, memorable images, lush and brilliant mass scenes, and a unique lyricism in which European features are organically combined with oriental intonations. The ballet is characterised by end-to-end symphonic development, large musical and choreographic scenes, intonational unity, and the widespread use of a system of leitmotifs.

Khachaturian composed the ballet over a three-and-a-half-year span. Even before the ballet's premiere, audiences were able to get acquainted with some of the music thanks to the suite, which was often performed at symphony concerts, enjoying great popularity.

The three suites from the *Spartacus* ballet were arranged by the composer between 1955 and 1957, before the revision of the score for the Bolshoi in 1968. Music is taken from various scenes in the ballet, with the best known being the solo of Aegina, a quick waltz, followed by general celebration in a Bacchanalia, and the moving 'Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia' (one of the most striking fragments of the ballet) with the dance of the girls

from Cadiz, and the Gaditanae, from the second act, when Spartacus and Crassus fight in single combat. Other movements in the suites are taken from various parts of the original ballet, with characteristic dances providing divertissements, in a work that in general follows a spectacular use of the *corps de ballet* with a solo dance that reflects the feelings of the principal characters in the story.

Masquerade Suite

Khachaturian composed the incidental music to Mikhail Lermontov's play of the same name in 1941. With this he managed to prove himself as a theatrical composer with an intuitive feeling for the stage. 'My passion for the theatre is such that if music hadn't filled my thoughts at the time, I probably would have become an actor.' Khachaturian gladly accepted the commission. 'I will never stop being amazed at the miracle of the drama *Masquerade*, written by Lermontov when he was 21 years old,' the composer later said. 'I took my work on the music very seriously. There were several reasons for this. First of all, I loved the Vakhtangov Theatre, which commissioned this music for me, and I often visited it. Secondly, I knew that many years ago Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov wrote the music for the production of *Masquerade* that was performed in St Petersburg by Vsevolod Meyerhold. When this performance was restored in 1938 and I saw it, I was surprised: there was no waltz in Glazunov's music, "set", as it seems to me, by Lermontov himself.'

The *Waltz* that opens the suite is one of Khachaturian's most striking works. According to the definition of the famous literary critic, Iraklii Andronikov, an expert on Lermontov's work, this is 'a generalisation of a romantic waltz, its quintessence'. The flexible melody of the waltz conquers with its sad, slightly melancholic shade, and the barely perceptible colouring in oriental tones (this is facilitated by the ascending stroke with an increased second, the soft variability of natural and altered steps). The sounds from the violins gradually grow, one motif pouring directly from another: the movement of the waltz is replaced naturally, preserving the general mood of poetic sadness, although sometimes there is brilliance, and elegance, even showiness. The middle episode seems to change the object of attention: if the beginning was like a portrait of Nina, conveying her mood, then now the picture of the ball unfolds in full chords of accompaniment, sweeping the melody in front of the listener; and the dance changes not only the character, but even the genre – the rhythm of polonaise or mazurka appears (observation by E. Barutcheva, Khachaturian researcher). But it won't last long: after forty bars, the former breathlessly sad waltz returns.

Nocturne (Khachaturian originally called this number *Romance*) is a lyrical intermezzo. In the play, it is associated with the image of Nina and accompanies lyrical scenes with her participation. It is based on the soulful melody of a solo violin, which is supported by clarinet, then solo flute and oboe. The delicate transparent accompaniment emphasises the mood of the 'song without words'.

The *Mazurka* – bright, joyful and spectacular – creates a contrast to the music related to Nina's characterisation. This is a general ballroom dance with mostly full sound (only the middle episode has a more transparent orchestration and quiet dynamic gradations), with a scope typical of this proud gentry dance. The melody of the *Mazurka* is set out by chords of high string and woodwind instruments, in a dense texture, as if opposing the uniformity of the main themes of the preceding parts of the suite.

The *Romance* that replaces the magnificent ballroom dance is similar in mood to the *Nocturne* and *Waltz*, which are thematically related. This is Nina's characteristic. The melody, assigned to the first and second violins in an octave, begins similarly to the *Waltz*. But she sings more widely and freely, reaching a huge lyrical intensity, despite its brevity, which occupies only 54 bars. This is the lyrical climax of the suite.

The suite ends with the *Gallop* – another ballroom number, depicting an empty, indifferent masquerade crowd, unmoved by the poisoning of the main character, Nina. The continuous, incessant pulse of the quavers creates a canvas on which jumping motifs from woodwinds with tart, sharp consonances are strung. The orchestral accompaniment is decorated with colours such as the glissando of flageolets on violins, the glissando of trombones, and the diverse use of percussion. Suddenly, the general cheerful movements is interrupted: everything falls silent, the solo clarinet sounds in complete silence. Then the flute enters with its solo, climbing in height with gradually increasing leaps of melody. And now the gallop thunders and gallopes again, ending in a whirlwind finale.

The transcription by Alexander Dolukhanian organically transfers the above-mentioned instrumentation to the piano, maintaining the texture and clarity of the original.

Mikael Ayrapetyan



MIKAEL AYRAPETYAN AT LAKE SEVAN, EASTERN ARMENIA
© Gennady Kurbatov

MIKAEL AYRAPETYAN

Mikael Ayrapetyan is a pianist, composer, producer and teacher, as well as a researcher and public figure. After his Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall debut, he went on to present works by 24 Armenian composers, and has been a leading figure in popularising Armenian classical music worldwide with his Secrets of Armenia musical project, which he began during his studies at the Moscow Conservatory. Born in 1984 in Yerevan, Armenia, he studied at the Moscow Tchaikovsky State Conservatory, and continues to uphold the performing traditions of the Russian piano school, of which Konstantin Igumnov, Samuel Feinberg and Lev Oborin are luminaries. This period was the start of his extensive concert activity in which he performs works by Tigranian, Chukhadjian, Komitas, Melikian, Spendirian, Barkhudarian, Stepanian, Khachaturian, Babajanian, Arutyunian, Abrahamian, Bagdasarian, Avetisian, Mirzoyan, Amirkhanian and many other Armenian composers, which eventually led him to produce his own concerts. After completing his studies at the Moscow Conservatory, Ayrapetyan performed widely in many countries, receiving an enthusiastic response from critics and audiences alike. His repertoire ranges from the Baroque to the contemporary and includes rarely performed works by Armenian composers. He was awarded the State Prize of the Republic of Armenia for his outstanding contribution to the development and popularisation of Armenian classical music.

His recording of Eduard Bagdasarian's piano and violin music on Grand Piano (GP664) earned a five-star rating from *International Piano*, and his album of Haro Stepanian's *24 Preludes* (GP760) was praised as a 'discovery' by both *Classica* and *Piano News*.

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ARAM KHACHATURIAN (1903–1978)

PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS

GAYANE • SPARTACUS • MASQUERADE SUITE

Aram Khachaturian was devoted to ballet music and produced two masterpieces of the genre – *Spartacus* and *Gayane*. Distinguished by indelible thematic beauty of which the ‘Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia’ is a perfect example, the ballets are symphonic in conception and, in the case of *Gayane*, marked by the use of leitmotifs. The *Masquerade Suite* is a richly contrasted theatre score. These sensitive piano arrangements preserve the very essence of Khachaturian’s music, maintaining the texture and clarity of the original orchestral scores. Mikael Ayrapetyan is the world’s leading exponent of Armenian piano music and his Grand Piano recordings of music from his homeland have been met with universal admiration.



**MIKAEL
AYRAPETYAN**

- | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|
| 1—9 | GAYANE (1942) (excerpts) * | |
| | (arr. A. Tseitlin, pub. 1962 & Villy Sargsyan, pub. 2005) | 26:24 |
| 10—16 | SPARTACUS (1950–54) (excerpts) * | |
| | (arr. Emin Khachaturian, pub. 1975 & Villy Sargsyan, pub. 2005) | 28:26 |
| 17—21 | MASQUERADE SUITE (1941/44) | |
| | (arr. Alexander Dolukhanian, 1946) | 15:24 |

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WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 70:19



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