



Khachaturian

Cello Concerto

Concerto-Rhapsody

for Cello & Orchestra

Marina Tarasova (cello)
Symphony Orchestra of Russia
Veronika Dudarova

alto

Aram Khachaturian

(1903-78)

Concerto for Cello in E Minor

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|---|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro moderato | 17:50 |
| 2 | II. Andante sostenuto – [attacca] | 8:11 |
| 3 | III. Allegro | 10:24 |

Concerto-Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra in D Minor

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|---|--|-------|
| 4 | Andante sostenuto e pesante – Allegro vivace | 9:45 |
| 5 | Adagio | 4:32 |
| 6 | Allegro animato | 12:25 |

Marina Tarasova, *cello*

Symphony Orchestra of Russia

Veronika Dudarova, *conductor*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Although **Aram Khachaturian** studied at the Moscow Conservatory his compositions remained strongly influenced by the folk music of his native Armenia. He was born in Tbilisi in 1903 and began composing whilst at school at the local College, at which time he played in a wind band. He moved to Moscow in 1921 and entered the university in order to study biology. He also enrolled at the Gnesin Institute where he studied the cello, later transferring to the composition class. Later at the Moscow Conservatory he was taught by Myaskovsky, having previously been taught by Glière at the Gnesin Institute. Whilst a student he had composed some pieces for the Armenian Drama Studio, where his brother was director, and other early works were clearly influenced by Armenian national subjects. Aside from the brilliant early Toccata for piano (1932) the first indication of a mature style was demonstrated in his Piano Concerto (1936), the first of three concertos composed over a ten-year period.

During the war years Khachaturian served as Deputy Chairman of the Composers Union, a post held until his denunciation alongside Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Myaskovsky and Shebalin by Zhdanov in 1948, all of whom were accused of composing formalist and Western influenced music. Such condemnation is curious when one considers some of the works produced during this period: Masquerade, Gayaneh, the Second Symphony and the two concertos for Violin and Cello. By no stretch of the imagination could his music be termed 'difficult' in the sense that Shostakovich and Prokofiev frequently are.

The ***Cello Concerto*** was composed in 1946 and represents his first great post-war score. It opens with a lengthy orchestral introduction (the most substantial of the three concertos) preceded by a timpani roll. The opening stressful motif on the

strings soon becomes a sighing passage in triplets. After a descending clarinet line the cello enters in markedly less grand style which is developed into a folk-like passage. When the soloist falls silent the tone alters, becoming more serious. At the return of the second subject Khachaturian shows his Armenian roots so that far from being a 'sighing passage' one is tempted to stamp one's feet in time to the beat. Following a long and complicated cadenza the orchestra reintroduces the cellist's opening material, joined by the soloist in ever more brilliant fashion – at times lyrical, at other times percussive – over the orchestra's semitonal accompaniment.

The second movement opens with Oriental-sounding melismatic wind passages against muted and menacing brass. The soloist enters with an unending elegiac song in which notes are repeated and then pushed upwards semitonally. When repeated the wind instruments add their voices to this now intensified lament. Following another melisma on the flutes the final movement is introduced by the soloist with another tune of repeated notes, but this time there seems to be a sense of desperation to enjoy life at all costs. This is certainly not the composer familiar to Western audiences through bright and vibrantly glittering national ballets. The second subject echoes some of the passion of the middle movement and the return to the opening material merely intensifies the desperation. Towards the work's close some sense of optimism is seen as the cellist surges upwards against decisive strokes from the orchestra. The first performance of the *Cello Concerto* was given by the work's dedicatee Sviatoslav Knushevitsky with the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra under Alexander Gauk in October 1946.

Khachaturian's three concertos were composed for one generation of renowned Russian instrumentalists: Lev Oborin, David Oistrakh and Knushevitsky. In 1954 he

announced that he would be writing a series of rhapsodies for younger players. He composed the first for piano in 1955, but it was not performed until 1968. The *Violin Concerto-Rhapsody*, premiered by Leonid Kogan in 1962 was rather more successful and the following year Mstislav Rostropovich gave the first performance of the ***Cello Concerto-Rhapsody*** at the Royal Festival Hall in London with the London Symphony Orchestra under George Hurst. Rostropovich first played it in the Soviet Union on 4 January 1964 in Gorky and Moscow received the work ten days later. The composer first heard the piece in concert in April of that year. Khachaturian died in Moscow on May Day; 1978.

As with the other *Concerto-Rhapsodies* this work for cello and large orchestra is in one movement but has three distinguishable sections. An arresting horn call sets the tone for the opening orchestral tutti. This gradually subsides and gives way to the cadenza-like entrance of the cellist. This cadenza of marked dynamic contrasts continues in frenzied fashion until joined by the orchestra, who provide a rhythmic accompaniment to the passionate cry of the cello first in triplets then in semiquavers. This leads into the lengthy lyrical central section. The final part sees the composer reminding the listener of his Armenian background in a series of fiery dance rhythms, not as immediately tuneful as the more familiar works, but every bit as vibrant. The return of the horn call initiates an orchestral climax after which the foot-stamping dances become ever more exhilarating.

NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

Marina Tarasova, the Russian cellist, is soloist with the Moscow State Academic Philharmonic, honoured artist of Russia, and born in Moscow. Like Khachaturian, she graduated from Gnesins' Moscow Special Music School and Moscow State Conservatory (Marina in the class of professor N.Shahovsky). She was awarded the laureate titles and first prizes at international Competitions in Moscow (Tchaikovsky Competition 1982), Prague (1975), in Florence (1979), and the Grand Prix in Paris (1985). Her great concert repertoire includes sonatas and concertos by many Russian and European composers, such as (inter alia) Locatelli, J.S.Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Saint-Saens, Brahms, Debussy, Rachmaninov, Miaskovsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Schnittke, both Boris and Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Britten, Vivaldi, Haydn, Boccherini, Davidoff, Khrennikov, Kabalevsky, and Ashpai. She has recorded the Davidoff, Myaskovsky, Khachaturian and Kabalevsky concertos as well as Rachmaninov's Sonata (all now on alto) and much chamber music.

Marina Tarasova has recorded performances on radio in Moscow, in Frankfurt-on-Main, and on the island of Madeira. In solo recitals or with Symphony orchestra, has successfully performed in Russia, England, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Portugal, Tunisia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, China and other countries, and has played with many remarkable world famous musicians, such as viola player Yuri Bashmet, conductors Kurt Mazur, Mikhail Pletnev, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Veronica Dudarova, and many more.

"A greater expressive sound, excellent technique."

– *Golos Pribrezhiya*, Poland

"Among the most brilliant artistic individuality we

credit to Marina Tarasova, her manner of execution draws attention to skill and her search for new expressive means."

– *Le Figaro*, France

"I did not notice Tarasova earlier, but now I am quite convinced, she is one of the outstanding cello players of her generation."

– Martin Anderson, *CD Review*, England

Her conductor in these performances, **Veronika Dudarova** (1916-2009) initially studied piano at the Leningrad Conservatory but later joined conducting classes at the Moscow Conservatory. In 1960 she was appointed Musical Director of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra and has also guest conducted leading orchestras in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Her other duties have included directorship of the Symphony Orchestra of Russia, a handpicked ensemble made up of prize winning players from leading Russian orchestras but based in Moscow.

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