



# Aram KHACHATURIAN

## *Concerto of Violin and Orchestra*

**Aram Il'yich Khachaturian** (6 June 1903 – 1 May 1978) was a Soviet Armenian composer and conductor. He is considered one of the leading Soviet composers. Born and raised in Tbilisi, the multicultural capital of Georgia, Khachaturian moved to Moscow in 1921 following the Sovietization of the Caucasus. Without prior music training, he enrolled in the Gnessin Musical Institute, subsequently studying at the Moscow Conservatory in the class of Nikolai Myaskovsky, among others. His first major work, the Piano Concerto (1936), popularized his name within and outside the Soviet Union. It was followed by the Violin Concerto (1940) and the Cello Concerto (1946). His other significant compositions include the *Masquerade Suite* (1941), the Anthem of the Armenian SSR (1944), three symphonies (1935, 1943, 1947), and around 25 film scores. Khachaturian is best known for his ballet music—*Gayane* (1942) and *Spartacus* (1954). His most popular piece, the "Sabre Dance" from *Gayane*, has been used extensively in popular culture and has been covered by a number of musicians worldwide. His style is "characterized by colorful harmonies, captivating rhythms, virtuosity, improvisations, and sensuous melodies."

During most of his career, Khachaturian was approved by the Soviet government and held several high posts in the Union of Soviet Composers from the late 1930s, although he joined the Communist Party only in 1943. Along with Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich, he was officially denounced as a "formalist" and his music dubbed "anti-people" in 1948, but was restored later that year. After 1950 he taught at the Gnessin Institute and the Moscow Conservatory, and turned to conducting. He traveled to Europe, Latin America and the United States with concerts of his own works. In 1957 Khachaturian became the Secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers, a position he held until his death. Khachaturian was the most renowned Armenian composer of the 20th century and the author of the first Armenian ballet music, symphony, concerto, and film score. While following the established musical traditions of Russia, he broadly used Armenian and to lesser extent, Caucasian, Eastern & Central European, and Middle Eastern peoples' folk music in his works. He is highly regarded in Armenia, where he is considered a "national treasure".

***Violin Concerto in D minor*** was completed in 1940 and dedicated to the Russian violinist David Oistrakh, who premièred the concerto in Moscow on September 16, 1940. Oistrakh advised Khachaturian on the composition of the solo part and also wrote his own cadenza that markedly differs from the one originally composed by Khachaturian. The concerto was initially well received and awarded the Stalin Prize for arts in 1941. The work became a staple of the 20th century violin repertoire, and maintains its popularity into the 21st century.

French flautist Jean-Pierre Rampal transcribed the piece for flute in 1968, with encouragement from Khachaturian. Rampal's transcription included a different cadenza in the first movement, but Rampal otherwise strove to adhere to Khachaturian's original. The Violin Concerto was the second of three concertos Khachaturian wrote for the individual members of a renowned Soviet piano trio that performed together from 1941 until 1963. The others were: the Piano Concerto for Lev Oborin (1936); and the Cello Concerto for Sviatoslav Knushevitsky (1946).