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The Significance of Aram Khachaturian and His Piano Concerto

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Graduate Program in Music

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Musical Arts

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Abstract

Aram Khachaturian, a Soviet-era Armenian composer, wrote his Piano Concerto in D \flat major in 1936. He was born in Tbilisi, Georgia to an Armenian family and moved to Moscow for his musical training at the age of nineteen. As a child, he was exposed to Eastern music of the Transcaucasus, which remained a lasting influence in his music. He created a unique musical sound that includes Eastern and Western elements. Khachaturian's music achieved success early in his career. The Piano Concerto, written during his time as a post-graduate student under Myaskovsky, remains one of his best-known works.

Khachaturian is one of the most prominent composers to come out of the Soviet Union. He is also the most well-known Armenian composer, and through combining Eastern and Western musical elements, was able to bring Armenian music to international audiences. He is an important figure to Armenians especially, as he raised awareness of their existence and the music of their culture.

This study explores Khachaturian's role as a significant Armenian-Soviet figure by first providing a brief history of the Armenian people. This is followed by a biography of Khachaturian. The final portion of the study provides historical context and a complete performer's analysis of the Piano Concerto. The analysis reveals certain aspects of the concerto that establish Khachaturian as a skilful and talented composer. The hope of this study is that it may inspire future scholars and performers to explore the less popular works of Khachaturian.

Keywords

Aram Khachaturian, Piano Concerto, Analysis, Twentieth-century, Folk Music, Armenia, Soviet Union, Transcaucasus, Moscow, Komitas, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Myaskovsky, Orchestration, Flexatone

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Preface

I chose the study of Aram Khachaturian's music for my DMA monograph because even though my background is Armenian, I knew very little about one of the most well known Armenian composers. This study was a way for me to learn more about Armenian history and music to enrich my own understanding of a culture that is part of my heritage. Through this study I also learned how remarkable Khachaturian is, both in his life and in his music, and his importance in preserving and spreading Armenian culture.

During my Doctoral studies, I travelled to the Republic of Armenia, which was my first visit. I heard Khachaturian's music performed in concert venues and experienced firsthand how important that music is to their culture. For my own performance events, as part of the Doctoral program, I included Khachaturian's Piano Sonata and his Piano Concerto in my repertoire. Both as a performer and a listener, I enjoy Khachaturian's music. Learning the history of the Armenian people and researching the context behind Khachaturian's Piano Concerto has enhanced my understanding of his music, and I hope that this study will inspire readers to explore his entire output. I have come to realise that Khachaturian is a significant composer of the twentieth-century whose less popular works should not be overlooked.

Chapter One: Context

1.1 Introduction

The Soviet–Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian is internationally recognized for his music. His contributions to Western music are often listed alongside his Soviet contemporaries, the great composers Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich. Khachaturian’s career thrived almost entirely within the USSR, and was in part made possible by opportunities only available to him because of the Soviet Union. As a result, his success as a Soviet composer has overshadowed his contributions to Armenian musical culture.¹ Despite his reputation as a Soviet composer, Khachaturian is still considered the central figure who brought Armenian music to international audiences.²

During his life, both his musical talent and his Armenian heritage allowed the Soviet establishment to use him as a symbol of musical multi-nationalism within the USSR.³ However, despite these circumstances, there is some scepticism among critics as to the authenticity of the Armenian influence in Khachaturian’s music, and whether his international reputation was achieved because of its quality or simply because of the publicity by the Soviet Union for successfully developing a Western musical culture within their annexed, non-Russian nations.⁴

¹ Jonathan McCollum and Andy Nercessian, *Armenian Music: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Discography* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004), 95.

² Svetlana Sarkisyan, “Khachaturian, Aram”, *Grove Music Online*.

³ Harlow Robinson, “The Caucasian Connection: National Identity in the Ballets of Aram Khachaturian,” *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 3 (July 2007): 429.

⁴ Stanley D. Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 27.

Khachaturian, who did not begin formal studies in music until the age of nineteen, achieved international acclaim for his pieces early in his compositional career.⁵ These early works include the *Trio for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano* (1932), the *Piano Concerto* (1936), and the *Sabre Dance* from the ballet *Gayane* (1942). These popular pieces are examples of Khachaturian's compositions that have remained in the standard concert repertory both in former Soviet Union states and internationally. However, these popular and early examples of Khachaturian's work do not represent all of his output, and there are many pieces that are not performed or studied, especially in Western musical establishments. In a centenary tribute to Khachaturian published in *Musical Opinion*, Robert Matthew-Walker discusses this, writing that "Khachaturian was not a prolific composer but his output is bigger than generally realized. In the twenty years before his death in Moscow, on 1 May 1978, he completed another three Concertos, one each for Piano, Violin, and Cello, each entitled Concerto-Rhapsody. None of these, however has proved as popular as the earlier works in the genre"⁶

Khachaturian's musical output and the span of his compositional career are largely underappreciated. The quality of his later works is particularly undervalued.⁷

⁵ Victor Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan* (New York: Sphinx Press, Inc., 1985), 106. Yuzefovich writes, "The [Piano] Concerto was especially popular during the Second World War, when soloists and conductors played Soviet music as an expression of solidarity with the USSR's battle against Nazism. During the 1943-44 season the Piano Concerto was played no less than forty times in the United States alone."

⁶ Robert Matthew-Walker, "Aram Khachaturian: A Centenary Tribute to an Armenian Master," *Musical Opinion* 126 (May 2004): 29.

⁷ Stanley D. Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 232.; Virginia Cummings Rogerson, "Political Influences on Twentieth Century Russian Composers and Their Compositions As Observed in the Literature of Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Khachaturian" (Master's diss., California State University, 1980), 80; Matthew-Walker, "Aram Khachaturian", 29.

Stanley Krebs, in his work *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music*, gives his views for the undervaluation of Khachaturian's later works by showing the similarities of both Khachaturian's and Kabalevsky's later careers. Krebs' writes, "Already heavily laureate, and busy with travelling, delegations, speeches, and State occasions, Khachaturian, like Kabalevsky, has little time left to compose. Having understood their environment, each has travelled a creative path into triviality; by doing so they have each 'betrayed' that understanding with later works of little or no success."⁸ This point is also discussed by Matthew-Walker, "In his last years Aram Khachaturian travelled widely in the West, especially to the UK and the USA, where he was rapturously received. In some ways he appeared to be almost a visitor from another age, for the massive popularity of his earlier works undoubtedly overshadowed his later compositions, which remain relatively unknown."⁹ Finally, Virginia Cummings Rogerson concludes that "Khachaturian's music may not be profound or philosophical, but it speaks of the joy and happiness of life."¹⁰ Some of Khachaturian's later works include the three Concerto-Rhapsodies, one each for violin (1961), cello (1963), and piano (1968) as well as his Piano Sonata (1961). The concerto idiom had previously been one of his most successful genres, and his three earlier concertos are among his most popular works. Another contributing factor to the decline in Khachaturian's popularity could be the rise of a new generation of composers in Europe and North America. Throughout his career, Khachaturian promoted his music as folk-based, and while his later compositions are

⁸ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 232.

⁹ Matthew-Walker, *Aram Khachaturian*, 29.

¹⁰ Rogerson, *Political Influences*, 80.

more abstract and move further from his earlier style, he never experimented with avant-garde trends.

Khachaturian's compositions span many genres of music, including symphonies, concertos, ballets, film scores, solo instrumental, and chamber works. In this study of Khachaturian, a discussion of the Piano Concerto will be provided, along with a formal analysis and reception history. The aim of the monograph is to provide historical and stylistic context of Khachaturian's music to aid in the interpretation of the Piano Concerto. The analysis highlights the similarities of this concerto's structure to standard formal design, and it identifies many unique features of Khachaturian's compositional style. Identifying thematic connections throughout the work can serve as a foundation for a performer's interpretation. By outlining the history of Armenia, detailing the development of Armenian music, and by describing Khachaturian's compositional style through the Piano Concerto, this monograph hopes to make clear the significances of Aram Khachaturian as an Armenian-Soviet composer and the importance of his contributions to Western musical repertory.

1.2 Literature Review

This review covers selected works that were written in English or translated into English. There is a small amount of literature written on Khachaturian that includes mainly biographical details and descriptions of the same compositional period of his life, from the First Symphony to *Spartacus*. There is also a moderate amount of literature on Armenian music, ranging from descriptions of folk melodies, instruments, and dances, to the sacred music of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Armenian priest and musician

Komitas Vardapet is often included in these sources, as “he is recognized as the figure most responsible for substantiating the very notion of an Armenian music and is without doubt the figure who has actually set the basis for our understanding of the Armenian folk music traditions.”¹¹ There are many sources for the history of Armenia and the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

For information on the Armenian ethnomusicologist, Komitas Vardapet, the EdD thesis *Gomidas Vartabed: His Life and Importance to Armenian Music* by Harry Begian, published in 1964, gives details of Komitas’s life and work, and was the first thesis written in English on Komitas.¹² In this dissertation, Begian also gives a description of the Hampartsoum Limondjian notational system, developed in the early nineteenth century, which replaced the old and incomprehensible *khaz* notation system in Armenia. *Khaz* is a neumatic notation commonly used throughout the Middle Ages by the Armenian church.¹³ The Limondjian notation system remained in use until the early twentieth century. Begian provides diagrams comparing the Limondjian system with European notation (Figure 1.1). This was the notation Komitas used almost exclusively to notate Armenian sacred and folk melodies, despite also having formal training in European notation.

¹¹ McCollum and Nercessian, *Armenian Music*, 55

¹² Harry Begian, “Gomidas Vartabed: His Life and Importance to Armenian Music” (EdD diss., The University of Michigan, 1964), ii.

¹³ Jonathan Ray McCollum, “Music, Ritual, and Diasporic Identity: A Case Study of the Armenian Apostolic Church” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2004), 11.

Figure 1.1 - The Limondjian Notational System and Equivalent European Notation¹⁴

	
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
<i>Limondjian Symbols</i>	✓ ~ ~ ~ ~ w ~ ~
<i>European Equivalents</i>	re mi fa sol la si do re
//	
<i>European Symbols</i>	o d. d d ♪
<i>Armenian Symbols</i>	o ∴ ∴ ∙
//	
<i>European Symbols</i>	♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
<i>Armenian Symbols</i>	ı ı ˘ ˘

A useful resource for Khachaturian and Armenian music in general is *Armenian Music, A Comprehensive Bibliography and Discography* by Jonathan McCollum and Andy Nercessian, published in 2004. The opening chapters describe important features of Armenian folk music and the differences in the study of Armenian folk music in Armenia compared with the West. The authors also explain that the literature on Armenian folk

¹⁴ Begian, *Gomidas Vartabed*, 14-15.

music should be divided into two categories, Armenian and Russian into one category and Western into another. After descriptions of Armenian folk instruments and Armenian minstrels, the remaining chapters are spent on Armenian composers in Armenia and in the West. The chapter on Khachaturian includes a brief description of his importance as an Armenian composer and also offers the thought, "... his music for *Spartacus*, his *Sabre Dance*, and his *Gayane* can safely be included among the best known pieces of classical music throughout the world, a fact that is vitalized by the perception that these are perhaps the only works through that the world really knows Armenian music."¹⁵ After the few paragraphs discussing Khachaturian, the authors include a bibliography of the literature available on his works, achievements, life, and other aspects, which are written mostly in Russian and Armenian, with some entries in English.

There are three biographies available on Khachaturian. The first, written by Victor Yuzefovich and translated from Russian to English by Nicholas Kournokoff and Vladimir Bobrov, was published in 1985. This biography contains many quotations from Khachaturian himself, as well as others who knew him, such as Dmitri Shostakovich. The author explains the purpose of this biography in the introduction, "... I resolved to write a book that would be as close as possible to what Aram Ilych wanted ... a book about his life, his meditations about his work, and his most important compositions, a book about the powerful influence exerted by Soviet reality on his artistic development, a book containing recollections of his meetings with writers, actors, and musicians."¹⁶ The chapters of the book follow the chronology of his life, starting with childhood and youth and moving through to the 1960s and 1970s. Interspersed are chapters devoted to specific

¹⁵McCollum and Nercessian, *Armenian Music*, 95.

¹⁶Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, viii.

works, such as the *Piano Concerto*, *Violin Concerto*, *Gayane*, *Second Symphony*, and *Spartacus*. The final chapter, titled “Artistic Principles”, describes the musical aims of Khachaturian’s compositions and the difficulties of adapting Armenian monodic music to European harmony and forms.

The second biography, written in 1959 by Grigory Shneerson¹⁷ and translated from Russian by Xenia Danko, was published almost twenty years before Khachaturian’s death. This biography emphasizes Khachaturian’s optimism and happiness, both in his works and in his life. Like Yuzefovich’s biography, this work includes many quotations by Khachaturian as well as passages from articles he wrote. The last work the biography discusses is *Spartacus*, which was composed the same year the biography was published, 1959, but Shneerson also discusses Khachaturian’s plans for further compositions, which included the three Concerto-Rhapsodies, on each for violin, piano, and cello, which he did complete, but also a fourth Concerto-Rhapsody that combined all three instruments (violin, piano, and cello) and orchestra, which he did not write. Khachaturian also had an interest in writing an opera on the topic of the Armenian people, which also never materialized.

The third biography, written by Georgii Khubov, is found as a translation as part of a master’s thesis titled “Aram Khachaturian and the Soviet Creative Artist” by Sima S. Mannick from 1947 for the University of Southern California. The first half of the thesis “has attempted to present contemporary opinion of the composer, to indicate the degree of success which his music is achieving, and to point out the conditions under which

¹⁷ Grigory Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, translated by Xenia Danko, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959).

musical talent is trained and nurtured in Russia today.”¹⁸ The second half, which is Mannick’s translation of chapters from the biography by Khubov¹⁹ from Russian to English, provides information on Khachaturian as well as an analysis of the First Symphony and the Piano Concerto.

Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music, by Stanley D. Krebs, although published in 1970, was completed in 1963 as a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Washington, and the author began his research in 1958. The book is organized into four main parts: the first deals with the historical background to Soviet Russian cultural ideology and music; the second with the older generation of Soviet composers, such as Reinhold Gliere and Sergei Prokofiev; the third with the middle generation, such as Aram Khachaturian and Dmitri Shostakovich; and the fourth with the younger generation, such as Rodion Shchedrin and Kara Karaev. Rita McAllister reviews Krebs’s book, in a review titled “Old Soviet Hat,”²⁰ and McAllister summarizes the limitations of Krebs’s book:

But by far the most serious shortcoming of the book is the author’s ostensible lack of commitment to his material. Those composers who avoid damnation by Mr. Krebs’s faint praise are extremely rare. Thus he considers Shostakovich ‘over-rated’, regrets that Prokofiev was the Borodin rather than the Mussorgsky of his century, is attracted by the question of whether Kabalevsky or Khachaturyan is the worse composer, and is condescending enough to deem Sviridov, being ‘a good composer in his environment’, worthy of his Lenin prize.²¹

Krebs’s chapter on Khachaturian opens with his thoughts that musically Khachaturian is a Soviet composer, but for the purposes of Soviet ideology he was called an Armenian composer. Krebs explains Khachaturian’s musical activity forms an important

¹⁸Mannick, “Aram Khachaturian and the Soviet Creative Artist”, 3.

¹⁹Ibid., 64.

²⁰Rita McAllister, “Old Soviet Hat”, review of *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music*, Stanley D. Krebs. *The Musical Times* 112, no. 1536 (February 1971).

²¹Rita McAllister, “Old Soviet Hat”, 134.

cornerstone of Soviet musical creativity because Khachaturian most successfully embraces the whole of Soviet musical orthodoxy, and “he epitomizes, in solid Russian style, the republican composer of ultimate, and imaginary, greater Soviet maturity.”²² While Krebs acknowledges that Khachaturian is an Armenian by descent and that he does use Armenian tunes in his music, he goes on to write that Khachaturian is just as inclined to use Russian, Uzbek, or Ukrainian melodies, and that these melodies are all treated in the same manner, “in the St Petersburg tradition.”²³ To add to his point he writes, “Understandably hazy about his folk roots, Khachaturian has suggested that his predilection for percussive harmonic seconds and his inclination to pedal and organ point have an Armenian basis. These are rarely encountered in Armenian music.”²⁴ Explaining in a footnote, Krebs states that Armenian folk music is largely monodic. Krebs then includes a biography of Khachaturian as well as a description and short analysis of the Piano Concerto, and the ballets *Gayane* and *Spartacus*.

An informative PhD thesis on Armenian identity in the diaspora is *Music, Ritual, and Diasporic Identity: A Case Study of the Armenian Apostolic Church* (2004) by Jonathan Ray McCollum. By interviewing members of Armenian diasporic groups in the United States, McCollum explores the idea of Armenian culture and identity to Armenians outside of Armenia. The thesis includes an analysis of Armenian liturgy and sacred music as well as a description of the community’s worship of the Divine Liturgy (*Soorp Badarak*). McCollum also provides a history of the Armenian Church and Divine Liturgy to give context to his research. An interesting section of this thesis is

²² Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 217.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

McCollum's discussion of early polyphony in Armenian music and the connections between the sacred and folk traditions. While discussing the work of Robert Atayan, who wrote on the Armenian *khaz* notation system used for hymns, McCollum writes, "If Ata'yan is correct in saying that polyphonic folk music came from the church, there is the implied assumption that either church music too was polyphonic, or rather, polyphonic folk music was based on monophonic church music."²⁵ He goes on to say, "Even Komitas Vardapet saw the presence of polyphonic elements in Armenian folksongs and incorporated these, most likely, into his own *Soorp Badarak*."²⁶

The PhD thesis by Harpik Der Hovhannissian from 1956, titled "Armenian Music: A Cosmopolitan Art," provides an overview of Armenian sacred, folk, and art music. At the time of publication, studies of Armenian music in the English language were extremely limited. In the folk music portion of this thesis, Der Hovhannissian analyses and discusses 111 Armenian folk songs that were collected by Komitas and compares his findings to the 253 songs from Komitas's collection that had been analysed by Sirvart Poladian in her book from 1942.²⁷ He compares technical aspects such as the types of scales (mainly fragmentary, pentatonic, and tetrachordal), major or minor modality, meter changes, melodic changes, and modulations. Der Hovhannissian believes Armenian music is a cosmopolitan art: "Armenian music has developed in the small Armenian communities of many countries where it has been in constant relationship with

²⁵ McCollum, *Music, Ritual, and Diasporic Identity*, 233.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 233.

²⁷ Sirvart Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942)

the music of indigenous races of both East and West.”²⁸ Because of these small Armenian communities, he writes, “Thus Armenian music, produced from the amalgamation of varied musical cultures, has developed into a type of music essentially neither European nor Oriental, but a fusion of both – a cosmopolitan music.”²⁹

1.3 Overview of the Present Study

Chapter One introduces the topic of the monograph and provides a literature review of relevant sources for this topic. Chapter Two includes a brief account of the history of Armenia, from the beginning of the culture to the Armenian genocide and also gives the cause for the large number of Armenians living outside of Armenia. This is followed by a description of the musical development in Armenia and the importance of the work done by Komitas Vardapet. The chapter ends with the biographical information of Aram Khachaturian and a discussion of the reception of his musical style. Chapter Three opens with an introduction and performance history of the *Piano Concerto*. A performer’s analysis and overview of the three movements ends this chapter. Chapter Four includes the concluding remarks on Khachaturian and his musical style and the significance of his work to Armenian culture.

²⁸ Harpik Der Hovhannissian, “Armenian Music: A Cosmopolitan Art (Volumes I and II)” (PhD diss., The Florida State University, 1956), 1.

²⁹ Der Hovhannissian, “Armenian Music”, 2.

Chapter Two: Reception History and Style

2.1 Brief Historical Overview of Armenia

The following provides a very brief overview of the history of the Armenian nation as well as a description of the Armenian genocide in 1915.

Beginning of Armenian Culture

The existence of the Armenian people dates back to at least the sixth century BCE, although there is evidence of their existence from the second millennium BCE, in historical Armenian territory, which “stretched between the Kur river to the east, the Pontic mountain range to the north, the Euphrates river to the west and the Taurus Mountains to the south.”³⁰ Despite invasions from Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires, a separate Armenian identity, rooted in local customs and language, was formed.³¹ The first Armenian kingdom was the Artashesian dynasty from 188/9 BCE to 10 CE.³² The formal adoption of Christianity is traditionally dated as 301 CE, although according to Razmik Panossian in his book *The Armenians, from Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, the more likely date is 314-15 CE, and that “has probably been the most important event in terms of maintaining a separate [Armenian] identity.”³³ The creation of a unique alphabet for the Armenian language by Mesrop Mashtots in 400-05 CE is also credited as instrumental in the preservation of a national identity.³⁴ For the next

³⁰ Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 34.

³¹ Panossian, *The Armenians*, 36.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 42.

³⁴ Ibid., 45.

thousand years, Armenia was ruled first by Arab, Byzantine, and finally the Ottoman Empires, and diasporan communities were created as a result of Armenian migration out of historic Armenia as well as border changes created by the competing ruling empires. Through this, Armenian identity remained in Armenia and the diaspora, mainly due to their shared faith and unique alphabet.³⁵ During the eighteenth century, Persian, Russian, and Ottoman empires fought for control over Armenia.³⁶ In 1828, Russia, after a series of wars with Persia, succeeded in taking control of Eastern Armenia and expanded the Ottoman-Russian border in favour of the Russians.³⁷ Eastern Armenia became a Soviet republic in 1920 and achieved independence, after the fall of the USSR, in 1991.

Genocide

The most important event in recent Armenian history is the Turkish genocide of the Armenian people living in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The systematic killing of over one million Armenians through lethal deportations and massacres were organized by the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) of the Young Turks political movement, which overthrew Sultan Abdülhamid II in the 1908 revolution. The three leaders of the CUP, known as the Three Paşas or the Triumvirate, were Mehmet Tâlât (Tâlât Paşa), the Interior Minister, Ismail Enver (Enver Paşa), the War Minister, and Ahmed Cemal (Cemal Paşa), the Naval Minister.³⁸ Prior to the 1915 Genocide, Abdülhamid II had been responsible for the massacre of 80,000-100,000

³⁵ Ibid., 72.

³⁶ Ibid., 110.

³⁷ Ibid., 120.

³⁸ Norman M. Naimark, "Preface," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), xvii.

Armenians during the mid 1890s,³⁹ and Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire thought the rise of the Young Turks would provide them with equality, justice, and a better quality of life.⁴⁰ While the deportation and relocation of Armenians began in early 1915, reports of which were recorded in the American Embassy in Turkey and which Tâlât and Enver dismissed,⁴¹ April 24, 1915 marks the true start of the genocide:

If we are, nevertheless, to seek a turning point at which it becomes possible to speak of an accepted practice of general destruction of the major Armenian communities of Anatolia – of which outright, mass murder was an integral part – that was maintained and extended until over a million Armenians were dead, we might consider the prisoners incarcerated in Constantinople on April 24-26, and deported to Ankara. With very few exceptions they were murdered, but only in mid-June.⁴²

The First World War provided the opportunity for the Ottoman government to commit the genocide since France, Great Britain, and Russia, the triple Entente, were occupied with the war against Germany and Turkey. Previously, those European powers had occasionally restrained the Ottomans' massacres of the Armenians.⁴³ While smaller scale killings and relocations of the Armenians in Anatolia were common, the total extermination of the Armenian people is an unprecedented event in Ottoman history, and can be explained by three factors. The first is the change of political power; with the rise of the Young Turks there came a desire for Turkish nationalism and a distrust of non-

³⁹ Donald Bloxam, "The First World War and the Development of the Armenian Genocide," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 261.

⁴⁰ Begian, "Gomidas Vartabed", 220-221.

⁴¹ Ronald Grigor Suny, "Writing Genocide: The Fate of the Ottoman Armenians," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19.

⁴² Bloxam, "The First World War", 269.

⁴³ Suny, "Writing Genocide", 30.

Turkish people.⁴⁴ The second, which relates to the themes of nationalism, is the dislike of the economic success of Armenian tradesmen and the competition between them and the Turkish people for resources, such as land, which “formed a hostile ‘affective disposition’ toward the Armenians, seeing in them an existential threat to the survival of the empire and the Turks.”⁴⁵ The third is the perceived internal threat to the empire of armed Armenians joining with the Russians in the war.⁴⁶ The events which led to the genocide were previously thought to have been motivated through religious differences, the Turkish and Kurdish Muslims dislike of Christians living together on the same land, but all three Pashas, Tâlât, Enver, and Cemal, the real organizers of the genocide, were atheists, and so the events were motivated purely through politics:⁴⁷

The story here is that the genocide was neither religiously motivated nor a struggle between two contending nationalisms, one of which destroyed the other, but rather the pathological response of desperate leaders who sought security against a people they had both constructed as enemies and driven into radical opposition to the regime under which they lived for centuries.⁴⁸

After the war and the creation of the new republic of Turkey, the Turkish government refused to speak of the genocide events committed by the Young Turks and the Ottoman government.⁴⁹ In 1933, the Jewish Austrian writer, Franz Werfel, published the novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, which described the resistance of the Armenian villagers of Musa Dagh against genocidal attacks.⁵⁰ This book repudiated the Turkish denial, and, “When MGM Studios announced plans to make a film of the novel, the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Turkish government applied pressure through the U.S. State Department and succeeded in stopping production.”⁵¹ According to Ronald Grigor Suny, who has written many works on the Armenian genocide, “The very term ‘genocide,’ invented by Raphael Lemkin during the Second World War, explicitly included the Armenian events along with the Nazi exterminations of European Jews.”⁵² The first serious studies of the Armenian genocide began in the 1970s.⁵³ These events continued to be denied by Turkey, but also by Israel: “a number of Holocaust scholars, seeking to preserve the ‘uniqueness’ of the Jewish exterminations, rejected the suggestion of equivalence between the Armenian and Jewish genocides.”⁵⁴ An additional statement of Israel’s denial is found in the article by Eldad Ben Aharon, *A Unique Denial: Israel’s Foreign Policy and the Armenian Genocide*: “During an official visit to Turkey in 2001, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres stated, ‘We reject attempts to create a similarity between the Holocaust and the Armenian allegations. Nothing similar to the Holocaust occurred. It is a tragedy what the Armenians went through, but not genocide.’”⁵⁵ As more countries and states accepted these events as genocide, the United States and Israel are significant exceptions.⁵⁶ Today, the European Union places importance in the formal recognition of the Armenian genocide, and European states that officially recognize the genocide include France,

⁵¹ Suny, “Writing Genocide”, 21.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 22-24.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁵ Eldad Ben Aharon, “A Unique Denial: Israel’s Foreign Policy and the Armenian Genocide,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 4 (October 2015): 683.

⁵⁶ Suny, “Writing Genocide”, 23.

Belgium, Italy, and Netherlands.⁵⁷ France formally recognized the Armenian genocide in 2001, and on January 23, 2012, made the denial of the Armenian genocide a criminal offense.⁵⁸ Canada recognized the Armenian genocide by passing Bill M-380 in 2004, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper confirmed this in 2006 with a public statement.⁵⁹

The events of the genocide solidified the nationalistic feelings of Armenians living in Armenia and the diaspora, and their desire to show to the world that despite the mass extermination attempt, they are a strong, undivided people. Any success of Armenians that achieved worldwide attention would be celebrated, since it not only contributed to the continuation of their culture, but also to their refusal to remain silent. The international success of Aram Khachaturian, a composer of Armenian heritage and who proudly announced the use of Armenian folk music in his highly popular and sophisticated compositions, further contributes to this cause.

2.2 Overview of the Musical Development in Armenia

Armenia, having officially adopted Christianity in 301 CE, created its sacred music for worship during this time. The ancient sacred music, which was monodic, was subjected to outside influences from the many nations which invaded Armenian lands, including the Arabian, Persian, Byzantine, and Turkish empires. The Armenian sacred

⁵⁷ Emil Souleimanov and Maya Ehrmann, “The Issue of the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide as a Political Phenomenon,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs (Online)* 18, no. 1 (Spring, 2014): 27.

⁵⁸ Souleimanov and Ehrmann, “The Issue of the Recognition” 25; This article also links to a list of countries that accept the Armenian Genocide <https://armeniangenocideblog.wordpress.com/tag/list-of-countries-officially-recognizing-the-armenian-genocide/>

⁵⁹ Karen Ashford, “The Globe’s Representation of the Armenian Genocide and Canada’s Acknowledgement” (PhD Diss., University of Windsor, 2012), 7.

music resisted these outside cultural influences, according to Der Hovhannissian, because of the church's dedication to preserving the original Armenian music. Der Hovhannissian writes, "Armenian music, emerging from such an amalgamation of Eastern musical heritage surprisingly retained its unique national flavour by tenaciously preserving the ancient Armenian church melodies for many centuries."⁶⁰ McCollum also discusses the importance of the Armenian church in preserving and maintaining many aspects of Armenian culture. In addition to the music, the church acted to maintain the national faith, language, and traditions of the Armenian people.⁶¹

While the development of instrumental folk music in Armenia has foreign influences, there are folk instruments that are unique to Armenia.⁶² One Armenian instrument is the *duduk*, a cylindrical oboe made from apricot wood with the reed usually sliced from cane growing along the Arax River.⁶³ The *duduk*, a symbol of Armenian national identity, dates from 99-55 BCE.⁶⁴ There are similar instruments in the surrounding regions, in Georgia, Turkey, Iran, and Azerbaijan, but "the most significant difference between the *duduk* and similar instruments lies in its tone, which is meant to express sentiments of sorrow and longing by imitating these qualities of the human voice."⁶⁵ The *duduk* is usually performed with at least two players, the second instrument holding a tonic drone.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Der Hovhannissian, "Armenian Music", 3.

⁶¹ McCollum, "Music, Ritual, and Diasporic Identity", 122.

⁶² Der Hovhannissian, "Armenian Music", 138.

⁶³ Robert At'ayan and Jonathan McCollum, "Duduk", *Grove Music Online*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The original music notation system used in Armenia, the *khaz* (neumes) notation, was introduced in the twelfth century and used for preserved melodies. Because of a lack of chant treatises from the medieval period, they remain incomprehensible today.⁶⁷ Before the *khaz* notation system, and with the invention of an Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots in 405 CE, letter symbols were used to notate Armenian chants.⁶⁸ There are thought to be fifty-four Armenian neumes used to notate sacred melodies. One of Komitas Vardapet's main interests was attempting to decipher these signs and from his work, he believed there to be eighty-five signs.⁶⁹ Komitas presented a paper on his research in Paris of 1914, which according to Begian, covered three periods in Armenian music theory: "(1) Founding of the *khazes* and early period – ninth through eleventh centuries; (2) Developmental period and period of its general use – twelfth through fifteenth centuries; (3) The period during which the theory of the *khaz* notation was lost – sixteenth through eighteenth centuries."⁷⁰ Because of Komitas's exile and eventual mental breakdown, the research he completed on that subject is now lost and the progress he made unknown.⁷¹

Hampartsoum Limondjian, 1768-1839, an Armenian from Constantinople (Istanbul), had studied the Byzantine and European music theories and notation, and he created a new Armenian notation system between 1813 and 1815. This system was extensively used in Armenia because of the lack of a previous usable notation and is still used by the Armenian Apostolic church. Limondjian developed the notation, which

⁶⁷ Begian, "Gomidas Vartabed", 130.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 129.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 130.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 194.

⁷¹ Begian, "Gomidas Vartabed", 131.

contains only fourteen symbols,⁷² to document and preserve monodic singing. This notation system was unable to notate polyphonic singing, which eventually led to its replacement in Armenia with European notation.⁷³ This system Komitas learned as a student and he continued to use it throughout his career to document Armenian sacred and folk melodies.⁷⁴

There is a strong connection between the sacred and secular music in Armenia. Armenian folk music, which is also mainly monophonic, had influenced the melodies of the sacred music.⁷⁵ In comparing folk songs collected by Komitas, and building on the work of Poladian, Der Hovhannissian states several overall conclusions. The Armenian folk songs in general are predominantly in a happy, spirited, or satirical mood, with many composed in a minor key, which Der Hovhannissian explains, "... a minor key is not necessarily sad, unless heard from the standpoint of a Western musician."⁷⁶ The tempo of the majority of the folk songs is fast, while the melodic line is mainly smooth, with larger intervals used to emphasize climaxes.⁷⁷ Der Hovhannissian describes an interesting practice used in folk singing that was noticed by Komitas. He explains, "... according to Komitas, in group singing a type of polyphony similar to that of organum is developed. When a singer starts the pitch of a song higher or lower than the usual range of another singer the latter drops his voice down a fourth or fifth below or raises it a fourth or fifth above. This unconsciously develops a polyphonic singing which passes unnoticed by the

⁷² Ibid., 11.

⁷³ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 11-12.

⁷⁵ McCollum, "Music, Ritual, and Diasporic Identity", 233.

⁷⁶ Der Hovhannissian, "Armenian Music", 123.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

peasant.”⁷⁸ Der Hovhannissian also states that while Western music excels in the use of harmony and scale systems, Eastern music has developed a higher degree of rhythmic-pattern constructions and rhythmic response.⁷⁹

The introduction of tonal harmony in Armenia began with European-trained Armenian composers harmonizing Armenian sacred and secular music. One of the first composers to arrange and harmonize Armenian folk melodies was Tigran Chukhajian, (1837-1898). Chukhajian, an Armenian from Constantinople (Istanbul), is known as the composer of the first Armenian operas and operettas. Chukhajian’s operas combined folklore themes with folk music arrangements for solo voice and chorus, and also incorporated folk dances.⁸⁰ His historical-heroic opera *Arshak II*, based on fourth-century Armenian history, is an important work in the Armenian opera repertory.⁸¹

Another Armenian composer with European training is Christopher Kara-Murza, (1853-1902). He trained in Italy for choral conducting and music literature,⁸² and in total composed sixty-seven original works and harmonized three hundred and twenty folk and church pieces.⁸³ Kara-Murza traveled and organized Armenian choral concerts in Baku, Tiflis (Tbilis), and Constantinople. On Kara-Murza’s harmonizations, Der Hovhannissian mentions that while they are progressive for the time, Kara-Murza’s musical training was not adequate to produce works of lasting interest. He states, “Such folk melodies in the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 122-123.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 104.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁸¹ Svetlana Sarkisyan, “Chukhajian, Tigran Gevorki”, *Grove Music Online*.

⁸² McCollum, “Music, Ritual, and Diasporic Identity”, 229.

⁸³ Der Hovhannissian, “Armenian Music”, 184.

Armenian music, with short repetitive motives, when harmonized in chord-a-note style become colorless and monotonous.”⁸⁴

Kara-Murza was hired as a music teacher and choir director in 1892 at the Gevorgian Seminary in Etchmiadzin Cathedral, which is the mother church of the Armenian Apostolic Church, located in Vagharshapat, Armenia. The Gevorgian Seminary at Etchmiadzin is where Komitas was a member, and, at the time of Kara-Murza’s appointment, a student. As music teacher of the seminary, Kara-Murza introduced polyphonic music to the choir, and he also taught European notation to the students.⁸⁵ After one year of work, Kara-Murza was asked to leave the seminary and Komitas was appointed as his replacement.⁸⁶ The common theory of Kara-Murza’s dismissal is that because he went against the established monodic tradition, the clergy resisted and he was then asked to leave.⁸⁷ Begian, in his dissertation on Komitas, states that Kara-Murza was bitter at his dismissal and that the students of the seminary liked his harmonizations of the Armenian liturgy.⁸⁸ Begian also questions why the ancient monodic liturgy would need to be subjected to Kara-Murza’s reforms, and that his dismissal from Etchmiadzin because of his work would be expected, explaining “In a church that takes particular pride in adhering to its traditions, some of which date from its founding in the fourth century, it would seem quite logical that attempts at any sudden reforms would only bring about united and complete resistance from the clergy.”⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Ibid., 188.

⁸⁵ Begian, “Gomidas Vartabed,” 19-20.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 24.

Komitas

The most important Armenian song collector, music researcher, arranger, performer and Armenian music educator is Komitas Vardapet (1869-1935). His numerous concerts, lectures, and teachings throughout Armenia and Europe made Armenians aware of their musical heritage and European musicians aware of the previously unknown Armenian national music.⁹⁰ The enormous contributions that Komitas made to Armenian music as a researcher, teacher, and propagandist, are summarized in Begian's dissertation, where he writes, "The fact that any article or discussion on Armenian music must eventually take into account some segment of the work of Gomidas⁹¹ establishes him as a truly important researcher in that field."⁹²

Komitas Vardapet was born Soghomon Soghomonian in Kütahya, Turkey. His ancestors had emigrated to Kütahya in the seventeenth century.⁹³ He was orphaned at the age of eleven and entered as a student the Gevorgian Seminary at Etchmiadzin Cathedral in Armenia.⁹⁴ While at the seminary, Komitas learned to speak Armenian, having previously only known Turkish.⁹⁵ He also learned at the seminary the Limondjian notation system, but expressed interest in learning European notation, partly through the influence of his teacher, Kara-Murza.⁹⁶ Komitas completed his studies at the seminary in 1893, was ordained a celibate monk, and given the name Komitas after Catholicos Komitas, Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians, of the sixth century, who was also a poet

⁹⁰ Ibid., 241.

⁹¹ Gomidas is a common transliteration of Komitas.

⁹² Begian, "Gomidas Vartabed", 240-241.

⁹³ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 2-3.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 19.

and musician.⁹⁷ He was then appointed as Kara-Murza's replacement as music instructor and choir director. Komitas also began collecting folk music at this time by traveling throughout Armenia and Tbilisi, Georgia, documenting the music he heard. He also collected music through the contributions of his students at the seminary, where he would notate the songs they knew from their homes.⁹⁸ In 1895 Komitas achieved the title of Vardapet (Doctor of Theology), and also published in that year his first collection of folk songs.⁹⁹ He had previously published an article discussing the melodies, rhythms, and construction of Armenian sacred music in 1894.¹⁰⁰

From 1896-1899 Komitas studied music in Berlin at the Richard Schmidt Conservatory and received his PhD in musicology from the Friedrich-Wilhelm University,¹⁰¹ with his dissertation written on Kurdish music.¹⁰² He became a member of the International Music Society and delivered lectures to the Society on Armenian music.¹⁰³ After his graduation, he returned to his teaching duties at Etchmiadzin and taught European notation and harmony, with approval by the clergy, which is a contrast to Kara-Murza's experience teaching European harmony at the seminary.¹⁰⁴

Komitas arranged and harmonized a contrapuntal version of the Armenian Divine Liturgy (*Soorp Badarak*) for male choir, which is an official version used by the Armenian Apostolic church.¹⁰⁵ Der Hovhannissian believes the reason why Komitas's

⁹⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 31-32.

¹⁰¹ Der Hovhannissian, "Armenian Music", 190.

¹⁰² Begian, "Gomidas Vartabed", 48.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 58.

¹⁰⁵ McCollum, "Music, Ritual, and Diasporic Identity", 232.

reforms to the Armenian liturgy were accepted was because “Komitas did not compose in extremes of either harmonic or polyphonic styles. He simply added secondary slow moving voices, similar to a drone, which the Armenian people were accustomed to hearing in the oriental instrumental music.”¹⁰⁶ Komitas’s style, which was imitated by early twentieth-century Armenian composers who also used folk music in their works, consisted of composing short motives and concise phrases.¹⁰⁷

Komitas visited France several times, the first in 1906, to give lectures and concerts, which were well attended by French musicians and press, and introduced French musicians to Armenian music. As Begian states, no one has done more to make the French aware of Armenian music than Komitas.¹⁰⁸ The French musical style, especially of Claude Debussy, greatly influenced Komitas’s compositions and arrangements after he visited Paris.¹⁰⁹ Debussy was also said to have had an interest in Komitas’s songs and arrangements. Begian writes, “It was Debussy who is reputed to have said that if [Komitas] had not written another thing aside from his “Andooni,” this would have placed him in the ranks of the finest musicians of his time.”¹¹⁰ *Antuni*¹¹¹ (*chant d’émigré*), was published in France by C.G. Roder as part of a volume, titled *Hai Knar (Le Lyre Arménienne)*, and contains twelve Armenian folk song arrangements.¹¹² The arrangements in *Hai Knar* are mainly for solo voice and piano, but some are set for four to six voices with piano accompaniment. The range of the majority of the songs is

¹⁰⁶ Der Hovhannissian, “Armenian Music”, 190.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 201.

¹⁰⁸ Begian, “Gomidas Vartabed”, 110.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 111.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The common spelling of *Andooni* is *Antuni*

¹¹² Begian, “Gomidas Vartabed”, 113.

within an octave, except for *Antuni*, which spans the interval of a sixteenth. *Antuni* is one of the longer songs in the collection. Figure 2.1 is part of the score of Komitas's *Antuni* and the top two lines in the vocal part show the first and second verses. In all of the pieces from this collection, Komitas demonstrates his attention to detail in notating tempi, nuances, phrasing, and accentuation.¹¹³

After his first visit to France, Komitas traveled to Switzerland and Italy in 1907, returning to the seminary at Etchmiadzin that year. Komitas decided to leave the seminary and monastic life in 1910, moving to Constantinople to fully pursue his musical interest.¹¹⁴ Over the next five years he continued to travel to Europe and Armenia, as well as to Egypt to deliver lectures and concerts.

On April 24, 1915, over two hundred Armenian intellectuals living in Constantinople were deported from the city and imprisoned.¹¹⁵ This event marks the start of the Turkish genocide of the Armenian people, and April 24 is observed by Armenia and the diaspora as the Memorial Day for the Armenian Genocide. After a two-week imprisonment, of the two hundred captured, only Komitas and six other prisoners were returned to Constantinople.¹¹⁶ Following this, Komitas suffered mental decline and in 1916 was confined to a hospital in Constantinople for three years.¹¹⁷ He was moved to Paris in 1919 and remained hospitalized until his death in 1935.¹¹⁸ The cause of Komitas's mental breakdown is not known, but the common theory given is that it occurred from the shock of his and his fellow Armenian intellectuals' imprisonment.

¹¹³ Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 151.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 222.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 224.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 229.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 230.

Begian writes the explanation given by Armenian newspaper editor Puzant Ketchian of Komitas's decline, "1. The deep shock that [Komitas] underwent during his brief but tortuous exile in 1915; 2. The collapse of his precarious financial situation with the start of World War I; and, 3. The general effects of a life of strict abstinence."¹¹⁹ Because of his mental condition, Komitas's work ended in 1915. Also during his exile, many of his personal documents went missing. In all, he is thought to have collected more than three thousand songs, of which four hundred are available.¹²⁰

The development of music in Armenia is split between sacred and secular music. With the adoption of Christianity and advent of liturgical music, two systems of notation were developed to transcribe sacred music throughout its history. With more Armenian intellectuals being trained in European music, and with Komitas's collection of Armenian folk music, the creation of an Armenian Art-music was developed through combining Western practices with Armenian features. The work of Komitas in educating both Armenians and Europeans on Armenian music led other Armenian musicians to follow his example and create works that continued to combine both practices. Finally, Komitas successfully introduced the development of Western music in Armenia and Khachaturian continued this progression, creating, through his music, the most successful fusion of both Western and Armenian musical practices.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 230.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 232.

pianist. His parents had an old and decrepit piano, and Khachaturian taught himself to play folk melodies and improvisations, which he attempted to harmonize with chords in his left hand.¹²² He was educated first at the Princess Argutinskaya-Dolgorukaya's boarding school, and later entered the Tbilisi Commercial School, becoming a member of the student brass band where he played tenor horn.¹²³ Khachaturian never finished his studies at the Commercial School; he left in his last year of school for Moscow.¹²⁴ Khachaturian attended one performance at the Tbilisi Opera House in his youth, where he heard the opera *Abesalom and Eteri* by Georgian composer Zacharia Paliashvili.¹²⁵ According to Shneerson, this was Khachaturian's most vivid musical experience from his youth, and it was the orchestra that he found the most interesting, both in the variety of instrumental timbres and in the harmonies produced.¹²⁶

The October Revolution began on October 25, on the old Russian calendar, or November 7 in Western calendar, 1917,¹²⁷ and resulted in the establishment of Soviet rule in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.¹²⁸ Khachaturian became a member of a group of cultural workers who travelled, according to Shneerson, "by the so-called 'Propaganda Train' sent from Tbilisi to Yerevan to popularize the ideas of Soviet power."¹²⁹ At each station, Khachaturian would play on the piano while other members distributed leaflets.¹³⁰ Shneerson does not write more about this time, but since he mentions that the

¹²² Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 16.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 37.

¹²⁸ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 20.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

train travelled from Tbilisi to Yerevan, it seems that this was Khachaturian's first visit to Armenia. Yuzefovich also writes of this experience. After Soviet rule was established in Armenia in November 1920 and in Georgia in February 1921, the propaganda train was organized in the summer of 1921.¹³¹ Yuzefovich writes, "Aram was delighted by this trip, from which he brought back so many impressions – his first sight of Armenia and its surroundings that charmed him so..."¹³²

His brother, Suren Khachaturov, had moved to Moscow before Aram Khachaturian, was active in the Armenian House of Culture, and worked in the Armenian Drama Studio. Shneerson writes that in 1921 Suren had traveled to Tbilisi and Yerevan to recruit fresh talent for the studio.¹³³ Suren returned to Moscow with both Aram Khachaturian and their brother Levon, a baritone singer.¹³⁴ Krebs gives a different reason for Khachaturian's move to Moscow, explaining, "In 1918, when Aram was fifteen, the desire among Georgians for independence was strong. Since, to Georgians, ideas of independence seemed to include clearing all Armenians from the face of the earth, the years 1918 to 1921 were precarious ones for the Khachaturians in Tiflis."¹³⁵ Krebs goes on to write, "...Suren was sent, with other Moscow Transcaucasian figures, to bring national cadres to the centre. He included his brother, Aram."¹³⁶

Khachaturian took part in many activities at the Armenian House of Culture in Moscow from his arrival in 1922 to 1929, which allowed him to study Armenian art and

¹³¹Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 13.

¹³² Ibid., 14.

¹³³ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* 20.

¹³⁴ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 15.

¹³⁵ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 218.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

culture.¹³⁷ He sang in the choir, and on January 14, 1924, was part of a concert that consisted entirely of works by Komitas, including songs such as *Antuni* (Homeless) and *Garuna* (Spring).¹³⁸ He also taught music to the Armenian children in kindergarten, and wrote simple songs and dances for them. Through his teaching, he traveled throughout Moscow and Yerevan to demonstrate his children's songs and teachings.¹³⁹

Student Years

Khachaturian was accepted to study biology at the Moscow University in 1922, but he also applied to the Gnesin Music School that same year.¹⁴⁰ He was accepted at the music school for the study of cello, an instrument he had never played before. Shneerson gives a reason for this unusual placement, writing, "This might have been dictated not so much by the natural aptitude Khachaturian had shown as by Y. Gnesina's desire to recruit students to the recently-opened class of the violoncello."¹⁴¹ Khachaturian began composition study at the Gnesin School in 1925, and also that year, according to Krebs, "... he was quite happy to be expelled from the biology faculty."¹⁴²

During his studies of composition at the Gnesin Music School, Khachaturian composed several short instrumental works, which were published, including *Dance* for violin and piano (1926), and *Poem* for piano (1927).¹⁴³ Khachaturian graduated from the Gnesin School in 1929 and entered the Moscow Conservatory. One of the first works he

¹³⁷ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 34.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

¹⁴⁰ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* 23-24.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴² Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 218.

¹⁴³ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*. 25.

wrote as a student of the Conservatory was the *Song-Poem 'In Honour of an Ashug'* for violin and piano in 1929. Khachaturian began studying with Myaskovsky at the Conservatory in 1930, and he composed the *Trio* for clarinet, violin, and piano as his student in 1932.¹⁴⁴ Prokofiev, visiting Myaskovsky at the Conservatory, heard Khachaturian's *Trio* and agreed to take the music along with him to France where it was performed in Paris. Shneerson believes this to be the first performance of Khachaturian's music outside of the USSR.¹⁴⁵ Khachaturian's *First Symphony* was written for his final examination and first performed at the Moscow Conservatory on April 23, 1934, conducted by Eugen Szenkar.¹⁴⁶

After his graduation, Khachaturian continued to study with Myaskovsky as a post-graduate student, and during this time he composed his *Piano Concerto* in 1936.¹⁴⁷ Shneerson and Krebs both note that Khachaturian received some help or encouragement from Prokofiev while writing this concerto.¹⁴⁸ The first performance was with two pianos by Alexei Klumov and Berta Kozels playing the orchestral reduction. July 12, 1936 was the first orchestral performance with Lev Oborin as the pianist, and the Concerto is dedicated to him.¹⁴⁹ Also around this time, Khachaturian began to write film music, and his first film score was for *Pepo* (1935), which is based on a play by Armenia playwright G. Sundukyan, written in the 1870s.¹⁵⁰ The plot centres on the conflict between the families of the poor fisherman, Pepo, and the rich merchant, Zimzimov, and is set in

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 30-31.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 26.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁸ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 221; Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* 40.

¹⁴⁹ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 40.

¹⁵⁰ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 82.

Tiflis (Tbilisi).¹⁵¹ Khachaturian wrote seven short fragments of music for *Pepo*, and Pepo's song became the most popular piece from the film, especially in Armenia.¹⁵² Pepo's song is considered the film's psychological center, and, according to the director Bek-Nazarov, "his song should express the very essence of his character."¹⁵³ Shneerson writes that many years after the release of *Pepo*, Khachaturian, while on a tour in Armenia, heard farmers singing Pepo's song, and when Khachaturian asked them what they were singing, they told him it was "a very old folk song."¹⁵⁴

Professional Composer

In May 1939, Gliere was appointed the head of the newly created All-Composers' Union, whose goal was "... to promote the "exchange of creative experience" at a level impossible or as yet impractical for local unions and to concentrate in one institution the Soviet Union's reserve of musical expertise, embodied in a diverse group of composers."¹⁵⁵ To assist Gliere as the leader of the Organizational Committee, which was the leadership body of the All-Composers' Union, both Khachaturian and Isaak Dunaevskii were appointed. Khachaturian, who quickly dominated the Composers' Union leadership, became, in effect, the Union's head until 1948.¹⁵⁶ Khachaturian solidified his position as de facto head in 1946, during the period when the Central Committee apparatus and the Committee on Artistic Affairs were reorganizing and

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 84.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 44.

¹⁵⁵ Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 24.

¹⁵⁶ Tomoff, *Creative Union*, 25.

adding members to the Organizational Committee of the Composers' Union.¹⁵⁷ This organizational change seemed to have threatened Khachaturian's position, and so Khachaturian asked the Central Committee to be relieved of his position in the Organizational Committee for the reason of illness.¹⁵⁸ This caused alarm with the other composers in the Organizational Committee, as Khachaturian's leadership had been very positive, and resulted in Shostakovich reading a collective letter from himself, Myaskovsky, and Shebalin arguing that it was essential for Khachaturian to remain in his position, to which Khachaturian agreed, and thus Khachaturian consolidated his personal authority within the leadership body of the Composers' Union.¹⁵⁹

An important issue that concerned Khachaturian and the other members of the Organizational Committee, was the protections of professionals from extra-professional censure, which could result in criminal charges and have consequences such as arrests, deportations, or worse.¹⁶⁰ Kiril Tomoff, in his book *Creative Union, The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers*, describes the aim of Khachaturian and the Organizational Committee in dividing the professional and political fields:

They undoubtedly hoped to keep professional criticism relatively moderate and to reduce the danger involved in taking professional risks. However, they also constricted communication between the profession and the party leadership to those channels that they controlled, thus assuring that their own professional opinions would not be questioned by less expert but more powerful politicians. By doing so, they undermined one of the party leaders' most important sources of control and drew an explicit boundary between the professional and political fields.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 99.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 100.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 101.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 118.

¹⁶¹ Tomoff, *Creative Union*, 118-19.

Tomoff describes the incident that occurred throughout 1947 that caused Khachaturian and the Organizational Committee to clarify the boundaries between the professional and political fields. This event began with the heated evaluation of the works of Soviet musicologist Aleksii Ogolevets.¹⁶² During this lengthy evaluation, Ogolevets had used various tactics to prevent people from speaking out against his work, and he succeeded in intimidating Shostakovich, who refused to take part in any discussion of Ogolevets.¹⁶³ Tomoff describes Khachaturian's response to Ogolevets's scare tactics, which took place in front of the Organizational Committee, writing, "Khachaturian noted that 'it is well known that you terrorize, threaten, blackmail. I know a few factors, and I believe that you had threatened people, [saying] that you would have them arrested, that you would annihilate them.'" Khachaturian then told the Organizational Committee of the threats Ogolevets had made to Shostakovich, and ended his lecture by saying:

You will never persuade me that [one of Ogolevets's colleagues at his laboratory] is a sincere follower of your scholarship. She is your ears around the [Composers'] Union. Everyone sees how she walks the corridors during intermissions and writes down what people say about you in order to deliver it to you. Is this really the behaviour of a great scholar, the title to which you aspire? Excuse me for the fact that I'm reading you a moral lecture, but I must say this to you."¹⁶⁴

Although many Committee members were disturbed by Ogolevets behaviour, both professionally and informally, Khachaturian offered Ogolevets the chance to accept the Committee's criticisms of his scholarly work that they were evaluating and convince the Committee that he would not continue with his inappropriate behaviour.¹⁶⁵ In turn, Khachaturian and the Organizational Committee did not expel Ogolevets from the

¹⁶² Ibid., 106.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 114.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 116.

Composers' Union, and Tomoff writes in conclusion to this event, "The result was that the Orgkom¹⁶⁶ practiced what it preached, keeping criticism about scholarly work and professional conduct within the confines of the Composers' Union."¹⁶⁷

In February 1948, as a result of the Zhdanov decrees, Khachaturian was removed from his leadership position and replaced by Tikhon Khrennikov.¹⁶⁸ Many composers, such as Khachaturian, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Shebalin, and Myaskovsky were criticized for formalism, which is defined by Tomoff, as "a 'renunciation of the basic principles of classical music,' propagation of 'atonality, dissonance, and disharmony,' and abandonment of melody, which in the eyes of the Central Committee resulted in 'muddled, nerve-racking' sounds that 'turned music into cacophony.'"¹⁶⁹ According to Andrey Olkhovsky, in his book *Music Under the Soviets*, formalism means "non-Partyism in art" and the "Soviet attack on 'formalism' is actually part of the complete enslavement of creative music for political aims."¹⁷⁰ Composers accused of formalism were often best known for their orchestral or chamber music, but who, as Tomoff notes, also wrote in more accessible genres, such as film music, since it was important to keep up their popularity with the people.¹⁷¹ As a result of February 1948, Shostakovich and Myaskovsky lost their conservatory positions, Shebalin was demoted from his position as

¹⁶⁶ Orgkom is the short version for Organizational Committee

¹⁶⁷ Tomoff, *Creative Union*, 117.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Andrey Olkhovsky, *Music Under the Soviets*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955), 13.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

director of the Moscow Conservatory, and performances of Khachaturian and Prokofiev's music were replaced at concert halls and theatres.¹⁷²

After 1948, Khachaturian focused on composing film music.¹⁷³ In 1950, Khachaturian began his teaching career at the Moscow Conservatory and Gnesin Music School, which, as Krebs puts it, fills in the gaps left by Shostakovich and Shebalin.¹⁷⁴ Also in 1950 Khachaturian began conducting, and he traveled as a conductor throughout Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Italy, England, and Finland, where he met Sibelius in 1955.¹⁷⁵ In 1957, he made an extensive tour throughout South America, which lasted three months.¹⁷⁶ In 1954, Khachaturian had been honoured with the title of People's Artist of the USSR.¹⁷⁷ This prize had been suspended since 1948, and when it was reinstated in 1954, it was awarded to three composers accused of formalism, Khachaturian, Shostakovich, and Shebalin.¹⁷⁸

Khachaturian wrote solo piano works throughout his career. These include his cycle of seven fugues, which were originally published in 1928, and in 1966, he added recitatives and republished the revised version of the fugues. Yuzefovich discusses some of Khachaturian's early works, writing, "Not everything Khachaturyan wrote in his student years has survived. But then, the composer, himself not always satisfied, was well aware that not all his early works were up to par, and so did not make some of them

¹⁷² Ibid., 206.

¹⁷³ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 229.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 230.

¹⁷⁵ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* 82.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 92.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 81.

¹⁷⁸ Tomoff, *Creative Union*, 241.

public.”¹⁷⁹ Yuzefovich goes on to discuss the fugues, “His cycle of piano fugues, composed in 1928, before he entered the Conservatory, also seemed destined to be forgotten.”¹⁸⁰ Khachaturian completed his piano *Sonatina* (1959) after an extended concert tour of Siberia with Kabalevsky in 1958. He dedicated the *Sonatina* to the children of a music school in the town of Prokopyevsk, Russia.¹⁸¹ Khachaturian thought it was important to compose music for children and he completed two *Children’s Albums*, the first volume includes pieces from 1926-47, the second was published in 1965. Khachaturian’s *Piano Sonata*, published in 1961, was premiered by Emil Gilels, who also worked with Khachaturian before the premiere, making suggestions, which turned into several rewrites of sections of the score.¹⁸² Khachaturian composed the three concerto-rhapsodies for violin (1961), dedicated to Leonid Kogan, cello (1963), and piano (1968), and he received a USSR State Prize for the three concerto-rhapsody’s in 1971.¹⁸³

Khachaturian’s wife, Nina Makarova, a Soviet composer who Khachaturian met as a fellow student in the Moscow Conservatory and married in 1936, died unexpectedly in 1976,¹⁸⁴ and she is buried in Moscow. Khachaturian died in Moscow on May 1, 1978 and is buried at the Komitas Pantheon in Yerevan, which is also the burial site of Komitas. According to Yuzefovich, at Khachaturian’s funeral, Komitas’s *Garuna* was performed as Khachaturian’s coffin was lowered into the grave.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁹ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 47-48.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 240-241.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 256.

In Armenia, Khachaturian is remembered in several ways. Yerevan's main concert hall, located in the Opera Theatre, is named the Aram Khachaturian concert hall and houses the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2003, to celebrate his one-hundredth birthday, the government of the Republic of Armenia founded the Aram Khachaturian International Competition for piano, violin, cello, and conducting. Also, Khachaturian's home in Yerevan is converted to a museum and concert hall, displaying items such as manuscripts and letters left by Khachaturian.

2.4 Khachaturian's Musical Style/Folk Elements

Khachaturian's musical style, as described by Shneerson, is influenced by folk music and its nationalistic spirit. Khachaturian uses that music as inspiration for his own melodic writing, but his music never directly quotes folk melodies.¹⁸⁶ Shneerson includes Khachaturian's comments that describe his use of folk music, saying, "I for my part prefer another approach to the folk melody, the one when the composer, in pursuance of his ideas and guided by his artistic sense utilizes it as a seed, as the initial melodic motif to be freely developed, transformed, and musically enriched..."¹⁸⁷ Shneerson describes Khachaturian's overall style as a blend of highly expressive melodic writing, creative rhythmic sense, and original harmonic language that is likely inspired by folk instruments.¹⁸⁸ Both Shneerson and Krebs comment on Khachaturian's skilful orchestrations, but while Shneerson describes his orchestrations as versatile, expressive,

¹⁸⁶ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 11.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

and able to achieve magical effects,¹⁸⁹ Krebs takes a negative view of the quality of Khachaturian's music, saying "He is a symphonist above all, understanding the texture, colour, and rhythmic possibilities of the orchestra as well as any contemporary composer, but, perhaps, exhibiting the depth of the least of them."¹⁹⁰ In general, Krebs's criticizes Khachaturian's large-scale works, writing, "Khachaturian's gift should have given him comfort as a writer of short dances and ballads. In his milieu where quality is often commensurate with proportion, Khachaturian's gift does not suffice."¹⁹¹ As Nercessian and McCollum write in their book on Armenian music, Khachaturian's music for *Spartacus*, and his *Sabre Dance* from his *Gayane* are included among the best known pieces of classical music throughout the world,¹⁹² and they are both large-scale orchestral works.

Three stylistic characteristics in Khachaturian's music are attributed to Eastern, or Armenian influences. The first is his use of driving rhythms, original rhythmic patterns, and abrupt metre changes, which Shneerson attributes to folk dance music, and which, for him, stimulates and excites the listener.¹⁹³ The second feature is Khachaturian's extensive use of the dissonant interval of the second. Shneerson includes Khachaturian's remarks on his use of this interval in his music, saying "Take for instance my passion for the interval of the second, major and minor; haven't I had trouble enough with my conservatoire masters and music critics over it! The discordant interval haunting me comes from the trio of the folk instruments consisting of the *tar*, *kemancha*, and

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁹⁰ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 218.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 232.

¹⁹² McCollum and Nercessian, *Armenian Music*, 95.

¹⁹³ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 31.

tambourine. I relish such sonorities and to my ear they are as natural as any consonance.”¹⁹⁴ Krebs dismisses this connection to Armenian music because of the monodic nature of Armenian folk music,¹⁹⁵ but, as mentioned above in the discussion of Komitas, while sacred music was always monodic, secular folk music developed a type of polyphony. Svetlana Sarkisyan, the author of the Khachaturian article in *Grove Music*, also discusses the Khachaturian’s use of harmonic seconds, as well as fourths and fifths, which he attributes to imitation of the tuning of folk instruments.¹⁹⁶ The third aspect is what Khachaturian calls his static bass or pedal point, and was a feature of his compositional style that he tried to be aware of.¹⁹⁷ Krebs believes this is one of Khachaturian’s most serious limitations as a composer, writing:

Grounds, drones, pedals, and ostinatos can support blinding rhythmic tricks and exciting or intense contrapuntal and harmonic forays; they can underpin the fierce, gay, morose, or tender; they can excite or lull, but they can also stupefy and paralyse. It is doubtful that the primary unifying factor of any work of symphonic proportion can be ostinato, without running the risk of the latter.¹⁹⁸

That comment was made during his discussion of Khachaturian’s *Piano Concerto*, which has remained one of Khachaturian’s most successful and performed works.

It is curious that both Khachaturian and Komitas describe their music as influenced by the French Impressionists, particularly Ravel and Debussy, since neither Komitas’s or Khachaturian’s first contact with Western music was the French style. With Komitas, who was educated in Berlin, he first heard the composers of the German school, and Khachaturian, educated in the Soviet school, the Russian and Soviet composers.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 33-34.

¹⁹⁵ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 217.

¹⁹⁶ Svetlana Sarkisyan, “Khachaturian, Aram.”

¹⁹⁷ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* 34.

¹⁹⁸ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 226.

Shneerson explains that Ravel's vivid harmonies, unique melodies and rhythms, and the colourful quality of his music is what attracted his work to Khachaturian.¹⁹⁹ For Komitas, the texture and transparent quality of the French style influenced his vocal and piano arrangements.²⁰⁰ Because Khachaturian had had a late start in studying music, he learned about Western music in a random order, with French Impressionists and Russian music learned and appreciated before the music of Beethoven or Bach.²⁰¹

An important question is whether Khachaturian is actually an Armenian or a Soviet composer. Krebs considers Khachaturian to be definitely Soviet. To support his argument that he was not Armenian composer, Krebs states that Khachaturian's first visit to Armenia, his "homeland", was in 1939 at the age of thirty-six, after the Ten-day Festival of Armenian Music where he was given various Armenian honours.²⁰² After this, Krebs writes that Khachaturian began his career as an Armenian composer. Khachaturian had made at least two trips to Armenia before 1939. According to Shneerson, besides Khachaturian being active in the House of Armenian Culture in Moscow since at least 1929,²⁰³ he made a trip to Armenia that summer, when he visited Yerevan as a member of the Drama Studio for the House of Armenian Culture.²⁰⁴ Victor Yuzefovich, in his biography of Khachaturian, also mentions this trip to Yerevan, and although he does not give an exact date, he explains that at the House of Armenian Culture, Khachaturian taught music and composed songs to the children in kindergarten. As a music instructor there he was asked to perform in other kindergartens and through that he traveled to

¹⁹⁹ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* 26.

²⁰⁰ Begian, "Gomidas Vartabed" 111.

²⁰¹ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* 59.

²⁰² Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 227.

²⁰³ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan* 27.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

Yerevan. Yuzefovich writes that in one kindergarten in Yerevan, Khachaturian met a young Arno Babajanyan and was impressed by his musical talent, predicting that he would become a great musician.²⁰⁵ Arno Babajanyan, a composer and pianist, was born in 1921 in Yerevan and so would not have been in kindergarten in 1939. There was also his first trip to Armenia with the Propaganda Train, mentioned above in the overview of Khachaturian's biography, in the summer of 1921, that is written on by both Shneerson and Yuzefovich.

In addition, Khachaturian was born to an Armenian family and was part of the Armenian diaspora. Tbilisi has had an Armenian population since the beginning of the seventh century, and Armenians continued to migrate there until they formed a significant presence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Tbilisi became the centre of East Armenian literature and culture.²⁰⁶ Begian states that Komitas was excited to visit Tbilisi, which he describes as containing an educated segment of Armenian secular life, and where he was also able to document more Armenian folk songs.²⁰⁷ Nercessian and McCollum also explain Khachaturian's often mistaken identity as a Russian composer, writing, "Khachaturian, despite his Armenian parentage and name, is often mistakenly thought of as a Russian composer, the mistake owing to a number of factors, most important of which are his activities that, by and large took place in Russia, and the mistaken Western identification (during the years of the Cold War) of the Soviet Union with Russia (Khachaturian was also born in Tiflis, an important Armenian centre of

²⁰⁵ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 35.

²⁰⁶ Satenik Mkrтчian, "Contemporary Armenian Community in Tbilisi," *Iran & the Caucasus* 13, no. 2 (2009): 299-301.

²⁰⁷ Begian, "Gomidas Vartabed", 32.

cultural activity, but the historical capital of Georgia).”²⁰⁸ In addition, McCollum’s dissertation on Armenian identity in the diaspora explains how the nationalistic feelings towards the Armenian “homeland” is not necessarily to the geographical area that is now called Armenia, which is a fragment of the area of historic Armenian land. He discusses the term diaspora and its relation to the Armenian situation:

“Diaspora” is a term traditionally associated with the Jewish exile, but is now used in cultural studies to cover a range of territorial displacements, either forced, such as indentured slavery, or voluntary immigration. When speaking of the diaspora, it is important to understand that as a discussion, the diasporic experience is tied to the complex notions of memory, nostalgia, and politics that bind the immigrant to an original homeland (or even an *imagined* homeland). Nearly every Armenian I have met has told me that “Armenians are everywhere,” indicating to me that “home” for the Armenians has become anywhere one Armenian meets another: ...²⁰⁹

Khachaturian’s later music never gained the attention or the popularity that his earlier works had received. For Krebs, who compares Khachaturian with Kabelevsky, he finds several common points between them, and offers an explanation for Khachaturian’s decline in popularity as the same reason for Kabalevsky’s decline. The first being the drop in quantity, since having already achieved fame and awards, they turned their attention to other activities, which left little time to compose. The second reason is due to the lack of quality of their later works, and he writes “Having understood their environment, each has travelled a creative path into triviality; by doing so they have each ‘betrayed’ that understanding with later works of little or no success.”²¹⁰ He goes on to say, “Now, one is not attracted nearly so much by the question, which is the better, as by,

²⁰⁸ McCollum and Nercessian, *Armenian Music*, 95.

²⁰⁹ McCollum, “Music, Ritual, and Diasporic Identity”, 75.

²¹⁰ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 232.

which is the worst.”²¹¹ According to Yuzefovich, Khachaturian had heard the rumours that he had finished composing and was now enjoying the rewards of his earlier works, but Khachaturian addressed this by saying, “Some think that Khachaturyan has settled down and is now basking in his glory. This is not so and I hope it never happens to me.”²¹² Shneerson also thinks the lack of time left to compose is the reason for the fewer works Khachaturian produced later in his life, but he also blames the constant revisions and alterations of his ballets that were demanded of Khachaturian by the theatres producing them.²¹³

Khachaturian wrote three concerto-rhapsodies for violin (1961), cello (1963), and piano (1968), and these works are different in style and mood to his earlier concertos. Khachaturian notes that all three concerto-rhapsodies follow the same formal development: introduction, cadenza of the solo instrument, slow theme, fast theme, and the coda, which combines both themes, enriching each other and achieving extreme virtuosity.²¹⁴ Yuzefovich writes the words of Soviet music critic V. Vlasov for the violin concerto-rhapsody, “We are accustomed to festive, dancelike rhapsodies abounding in technical brilliance and virtuoso effect. Khachaturyan’s Violin Rhapsody is more of a concerto, a poem, a meditative improvisation.”²¹⁵ Yuzefovich believes these words apply well to all three of the concerto-rhapsodies. Khachaturian’s last three works are three sonatas for unaccompanied cello (1974), violin (1975), and viola (1976). Yuzefovich also finds it interesting that the last works of both Shostakovich and Khachaturian, who had

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 250.

²¹³ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 95.

²¹⁴ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 239.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

been life-long friends, were both for viola, Shostakovich's *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, op. 147 (1975), and Khachaturian's *Sonata-Song* for solo viola (1976).²¹⁶

Khachaturian's musical style features the successful blend of Armenian nationalistic elements with Western music, which achieved almost immediate fame and recognition. The Armenian elements remained a source of inspiration for his music throughout his compositional career. His music can be described as energetic, rhythmically powerful, and with a unique harmonic language that is contrasted with his emotional and lyrical melodic writing. Formally, he often follows loosely the outlines of standard structures, such as sonata form, and often includes improvisatory-like sections to his music. He was highly skilled as a symphonist and created unique orchestral colours and timbres. Khachaturian embraced his Armenian heritage, and his music has greatly benefited the Armenian people and culture, but he can also be considered international, in that his music is able to connect with people worldwide.

Following this general overview of Khachaturian's life and works, Chapter Three is an in-depth study of his Piano Concerto. By first exploring the context of this work and by the theoretical analysis, the aim of the chapter is to provide insights that are helpful in musical interpretation and in general understanding of the piece.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 245.

Chapter Three: Analysis of the Piano Concerto

3.1 Introduction to the Concerto

The first performance of the concerto, before the premiere by Oborin and conductor Lev Steinberg on July 12, 1937 at Moscow's Sokolniki Park,²¹⁷ was with two pianos, the second piano playing the orchestral reduction. The pianists were Alexei Klumov, playing the piano solo, and Berta Kozel; and it was performed at the Moscow Conservatory.²¹⁸ The accounts of Khachaturian biographers Yuzefovich and Shneerson both discuss Alexei Klumov as the pianist at this first performance.²¹⁹ Mannick also writes that the pianist Klumov first performed the concerto.²²⁰ At first it is unclear why only Stanley Krebs disagrees with this, and why he believes that Klumov is actually an alias for Khachaturian: "The piano concerto was first performed in the Maly (small) Hall of the conservatory in late 1936 by pianists Bertha Kazel' and 'Aleksei Klumov.' Klumov was actually Khachaturian-Khachaturov."²²¹ Krebs later refers to Khachaturian as 'Klumov-Khachaturov-Khachaturian.'²²² Alexei Klumov (1907-44) was a piano student of Heinrich Neuhaus and Gnesin for composition²²³ while Khachaturian was a post-graduate student. In addition, Yuzefovich writes that as well as performing the concerto, Klumov also gave Khachaturian advice on the actual writing of the work.²²⁴ It

²¹⁷ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 100.

²¹⁸ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 40.

²¹⁹ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 40; Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 99.

²²⁰ Mannick, "Aram Khachaturian", 115.

²²¹ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 226.

²²² *Ibid.*, 227.

²²³ David Fanning, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg in Search of Freedom*, (Germany: Wolk Verlag, Hofheim, 2010), 24.

²²⁴ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 99.

later becomes evident that Krebs is promoting the idea that Khachaturian also went by the more Russian sounding name of Alexei Klumov to strengthen Krebs's argument that Khachaturian is a Russian composer that only identified with his Armenian side when it would best serve his career, implying that any Armenian influences in the music are not genuine.

State Music Publishers in the USSR first published the concerto in 1938.²²⁵ The British premiere was with Moura Lympny in 1940,²²⁶ and she recorded the concerto with the conductor Anatole Fistoulari with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. American pianist William Kapell recorded the concerto in 1946 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky, and Kapell's interpretation became known worldwide.²²⁷

This is the first concerto Khachaturian wrote, completed shortly after his *First Symphony*, while he was doing post-graduate studies with Myaskovsky. At this time Khachaturian was especially interested in studying Prokofiev's music. In addition to studying his music, Khachaturian asked for Prokofiev's advice in composing this concerto, playing portions of it for Prokofiev each time they met.²²⁸ The perpetual sixteenth-note motive and dry articulations in the main theme of the third movement are suggestive of Prokofiev's toccata style,²²⁹ which can be found in his *Tocatta* op. 11 (1912) and the third movement of his *Piano Concerto no. 5*, op. 55 (1932). The *Tocatta*

²²⁵ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 40.

²²⁶ Frank Dawes and Bryce Morrison, "Lympny, Dame Moura," *Grove Music Online*.

²²⁷ Michael H Arshagouni, "Music: Vintage Khachaturian," *Aim* 5 no. 4 (Apr. 30, 1994): 42.

²²⁸ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 40.

²²⁹ Mannick, *Aram Khachaturian*, 125.

op. 11 is rhythmically unified by a sixteenth-note ostinato,²³⁰ and is a virtuoso perpetual-motion piece.²³¹

Khachaturian's concerto also features the flexatone in the second movement, a relatively new instrument at the time, as it was invented in Britain in 1922.²³² In 1924 in the USA the flexatone was introduced as an instrument to make 'jazz jazzier'.²³³ The flexatone is a pitched percussion instrument that produces sound by the player shaking the instrument so the wooden beaters strike the sides of the small flexible metal sheet, producing an eerie tremolo sound.²³⁴ The pitch is altered by variable pressure on the metal.²³⁵ Shostakovich used the flexatone in several compositions before Khachaturian, such as in his opera *The Nose* (1928),²³⁶ music for the film *New Babylon* (1929),²³⁷ and in the incidental music for *The Bedbug* (1929).²³⁸ According to the biography *Dmitri Shostakovich, Pianist* by Sofia Moshevich, Shostakovich and Khachaturian met in 1934, and the two became "fast friends."²³⁹ By 1936, Shostakovich considered both Khachaturian and Khachaturian's wife, Nina Makarova, to be among his "closest trusted

²³⁰ William Paul Brown, I., II., "A Comparative Study of Toccatas for Piano by Schumann, Debussy, Ravel, Prokofiev, and Busoni" (Ph.D. diss., Indian University, 1979), 47.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

²³² James Blades and James Holland, "Flexatone." *Grove Music Online*.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Laurel E. Fay, "Black Comedy Tonight," *Opera News* 74, Issue 9 (Mar. 2010): 25.

²³⁷ Haller. "Shostakovich: New Babylon." *American Record Guide* (Mar.-Apr. 2012): 154.

²³⁸ Benjamin Lorenzo, "Wind Ensembles in the Incidental and Film Music of Dmitri Shostakovich." *Journal of Band Research* 50, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 4.

²³⁹ Sofia Moshevich, *Dmitri Shostakovich, Pianist* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2004), 81.

friends.”²⁴⁰ Shostakovich shared a private performance of his Symphony No. 4 (1935-6) with them, a piece that he withdrew from the public before its premiere for fear of being criticised and arrested for showing disloyalty to his country.²⁴¹ There is some speculation, however, that Khachaturian had wanted to use a musical saw, and as there were none available, substituted the flexatone.²⁴²

As well as being his first concerto, this is one of Khachaturian’s best-known works in his entire output, and it became popular worldwide very quickly, a point which is stated by many who wrote about Khachaturian, including Yuzefovich, Shneerson, and Krebs. Yuzefovich makes a connection between the quick rise in popularity of the concerto, both in the USSR and internationally, and the Soviet performers who performed it. During the time the concerto was written, Soviet performers were dominating international competitions, and Khachaturian chose to dedicate the piece to Lev Oborin, the winner of the First International Chopin Competition in 1927 in Warsaw. After Oborin, Emil Gilels took an interest in the Piano Concerto and also was the first to play his Piano Sonata.²⁴³ Yuzefovich partially credits the Piano Concerto’s fame to the fact that the Soviet Union was producing internationally acclaimed performers who were interested in playing Khachaturian’s music. He writes, “no wonder that the very appearance of Khachaturyan’s concertos and their frequent performance were largely due to these outstanding Soviet musicians.”²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 89.

²⁴¹ Ibid. Arnold Schoenberg also used the flexatone in his *Variations for Orchestra* (1926-8), (James Blades and James Holland, "Flexatone") but Khachaturian was opposed to Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system (Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 230).

²⁴² James Blades and James Holland, "Flexatone".

²⁴³ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 96.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Although not a virtuosic pianist himself, Khachaturian wrote fluently and idiomatically for the piano. Yuzefovich also believes that another reason for the concerto's enduring popularity is that pianists find the work to be a challenge to their virtuosity.²⁴⁵ This virtuosity is especially found in the cadenzas of the first and third movements.

The Piano Concerto is Khachaturian's second large-scale work that utilizes orchestra. His first orchestral piece is the *Dance Suite* (1933), which is a collection of five short dances, and his first large-scale work is the *First Symphony* (1934). The *First Symphony* received praise for Khachaturian's mastery of orchestration techniques,²⁴⁶ which established a standard that is maintained in the Piano Concerto.

Khachaturian's music has received criticism for being conservative, an impression that may come from his publications condemning twelve-tone music. Krebs describes Khachaturian as "horrified, in print, at the number of 12-tone composers he meets outside the Soviet Union."²⁴⁷ Krebs also writes that the *Trio for clarinet, violin, and piano* (1932) "failed to make much impression in *avant-garde* Paris."²⁴⁸ Other writers find Khachaturian's music to be individualistic and progressive because his music does not fully rely on Russian and Western musical traditions.²⁴⁹ Yuzefovich believes that the true importance of Khachaturian's music is that it is conventional. He writes: "The importance of Khachaturian's music is that it vividly and unequivocally proved the opposite, that in principle innovation is possible where there is respect for the best traditions of musical

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 103.

²⁴⁶ Krebs, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 220.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 230.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 219.

²⁴⁹ Olkhovsky, *Music Under the Soviets*, 222-223.

art, both professional and folk, and for genuine democracy.”²⁵⁰ While Khachaturian does follow certain traditions of the classical instrumental concerto, such as the first movement being in sonata form, the piece may not be as conventional as Yuzefovich’s words at first imply. In fact, Yuzefovich points out several aspects in the concerto that create something new. He writes that Khachaturian spoke of sonata form “as a Procrustean bed shackling the imagination,”²⁵¹ but in this concerto, it “became a pliant means of artistic expression.”²⁵² The composer’s difficulty in following formal structures may stem from his desire to incorporate improvisatory sounding sections into his music. Improvisation was a large part of his own playing and is associated with Eastern folk music traditions, and is not usually found in European art music.²⁵³

Khachaturian’s innovative interpretation of folk traditions includes enriching the piano texture with the aural impression of the specific sounds of folk instruments as well as their characteristic pitch and scale of overtones.²⁵⁴ In addition to his saying that Khachaturian’s music proves that innovation is possible by respecting past musical traditions, Yuzefovich states that the importance of Khachaturian’s music is it equally shows the possibility of symphonising Eastern music.²⁵⁵

Armenian Folk Music Characteristics

Harpik Der Hovannissian, an authority on Armenian music studies, categorizes Armenian music into church music, folk music, folk dance, and art music in his

²⁵⁰ Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 105

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

dissertation written in 1956.²⁵⁶ Within each of these categories, he outlines several elements that are idiomatic to that category. In the folk music section, Der Hovhannissian lists common characteristics that he found by analyzing 111 of the melodies Komitas notated from the music of Armenian peasants. He compares this with the study of Armenian folk-tunes by Sirvart Poladian, who analysed 253 songs from Komitas's collections in her book *Armenian Folk Songs* (1942). Hovhanissian studies songs that Poladian did not, and also includes Poladian's findings in his dissertation for comparison to his own. Hovhanissian found that the majority of songs are diatonic, in minor scales, and that they correspond with the "Greek Phrygian tetrachordal or penta-chordal genus," which findings, he states, agree with Poladian.²⁵⁷

In terms of meter, Der Hovhannissian divides the folk songs according to simple duple (2/4), simple triple (3/8, 3/4, 3/2), and compound time, and lists his conclusions alongside those of Poladian's results. Here he found that the two conclusions did not match. Der Hovhannissian states that Poladian found that duple rhythms are more predominant than folk songs with triple meter, and Der Hovhannissian found triple meter more common than duple, but by combining the two results he found overall triple time exceeds duple time by approximately ten percent.²⁵⁸ Der Hovhannissian offers a few reasons for the different conclusions, and he writes, "It is also probable that Komitas, being a well-trained musician, may have taken the liberty of altering the rhythmic patterns of certain melodies to cover deficient construction of a measure or form."²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Der Hovhannissian, "Armenian Music".

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 97.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 104-105.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 107.

Der Hovhannissian describes two rhythmic motives that he believes are a distinctive characteristic of Armenian folk, dance, and church music. The first, in 3/8 meter, is an accented eighth note followed by a quarter note, shown in Figure 3.1, and is a rhythmic motive that he found to predominate in most of the Armenian folk-songs.²⁶⁰ This rhythmic motive can undergo a slight variation, which Der Hovhannissian explains: “This characteristic rhythmic ‘motive’ of the Armenian folk-music sometimes reverses itself in alternate measures, probably to escape monotony.”²⁶¹ He includes an example of a folk-song that illustrates alternating bars with the rhythmic motive reversed, and Figure 3.2 shows just the rhythmic aspect of Der Hovhannissian’s example.²⁶²

Figure 3.1 Rhythmic motive prominent in most Armenian folk-songs



Figure 3.2 Rhythmic representation of Armenian folk-music motive



²⁶⁰ Ibid., 110.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

The second rhythmic motive is that of two sixteenth-notes followed by an eighth note, or two eighth notes followed by a quarter note, shown in Figure 3.3. This motive Der Hovhannissian has found in both Armenian folk songs and church music.²⁶³

Figure 3.3 Prominent rhythmic motive found in Armenian folk and church music



The theme from the second movement of Khachaturian's Piano Concerto is based on a folk melody, which Shneerson transcribes in his book, and is reproduced in Figure 3.4.²⁶⁴ This melody, which Khachaturian heard in Tbilisi, was very popular at the time, and is one that Khachaturian believes any inhabitant of the Transcaucasus would know very well.²⁶⁵ The Transcaucasia region corresponds to the countries of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and is south of the Caucasus Mountains.²⁶⁶

Figure 3.4 Folk melody from Transcaucasia



²⁶³ Ibid., 111.

²⁶⁴ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 42.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica, "Transcaucasia." *Britannica Academic*.

Khachaturian modified and developed the melody to create his theme for the second movement.²⁶⁷ Shneerson writes that Khachaturian was surprised no one recognized the original melody, “It is a curious fact that even the Georgian and Armenian musicians I spoke to could not recognize its popular prototype, although a superficial analysis was enough to show that the two possessed common melodic elements.”²⁶⁸ The theme from the second movement is shown in Figure 3.5.

Krebs disagrees that developing the second movement theme from a Transcaucasian folk melody strengthens the ties to Armenia. He writes: “The concerto contains some themes developed from Transcaucasian tunes, but this makes it precisely as Armenian as Dvořák’s *New World Symphony* is American, or as Mendelssohn’s *Scotch Symphony* is Scottish.”²⁶⁹ Krebs’s comparison of Khachaturian to Dvořák and Mendelssohn is not valid. Khachaturian was born and raised in the Transcaucasia region, into an Armenian family, and was exposed to the music of that region before learning Western music. This is in contrast to Dvořák and Mendelssohn, who were both not from the places that their pieces were inspired by.

Figure 3.5 piano part, Second Movement of the Piano Concerto, mm. 9-16²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 42.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁶⁹ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 221.

²⁷⁰ A. Khachaturian, *Piano Concerto Reduction for Two Pianos* (London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.).

These rhythmic motives found in folk music, described above, can be found in Khachaturian's Piano Concerto and will be included in the analysis of the three movements. These patterns are part of the three stylistic characteristics of Khachaturian's music listed in section 2.4. (The first characteristic is driving rhythms, original rhythmic patterns, and abrupt metre changes; the second characteristic is the extensive use of the dissonant interval of the second; the third characteristic is static bass or pedal point). All of the above stated qualities, in addition to the main theme of the second movement having a basis in a folk melody, contribute to the Armenian sound in Khachaturian's musical style.

3.2 First Movement

The instrumentation for the orchestra is: 2 Flutes (1st doubling Piccolo), 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets in B \flat , Bass Clarinet, 2 Bassoons, 4 Horns in F, 2 Trumpets in B \flat , 3 Trombones, Tuba, Timpani, Percussion (glockenspiel, flexatone, small side drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal), and Strings. The First Movement, *Allegro ma non troppo e maestoso*, is in sonata form in D \flat major. The First Movement analysis is presented in the following chart and is divided into sections showing the formal structure.

First Movement - *Allegro ma non troppo e maestoso*
Sonata Form

Section	Measure Number	Key
Introduction	1-10	D \flat major

Exposition- First Theme	11-60 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11-37 (theme in piano) • 38-45 (bridge) • 46-60 (theme in orchestra) 	D \flat major
Exposition- Bridge	61-89	D \flat major – V of F (the bass pedal of orchestral Second Theme centres on F)
Exposition- Second Theme	90-174 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90-117 (orchestra solo) • 118-174 (piano solo) 	E \flat minor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F bass pedal for orchestra solo • D\flat bass pedal for piano solo • Climax (m. 144) bass resolves to E\flat
Exposition- Codetta	175-181	E \flat minor
Development	182-306 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 182-189 • 190-227 • 228-250 • 251-291 • 292-306 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bass pedals on: C\flat (mm. 182-189); E (mm. 190-227); F\sharp (mm. 228-250) • Tempo change and no bass pedal (mm.251-291) • Retransition (mm. 292-306) leads to D\flat major with no clear dominant preparation
Recapitulation- First Theme	307-333 (theme in piano)	D \flat major
Recapitulation- Bridge	333-346	
Recapitulation- Second Theme	347-390 (theme alternating between orchestra and piano)	D \flat major

Recapitulation-Codetta	391-400	D \flat major
Cadenza	401-485	D \flat major
Coda	486-498	D \flat major

The First Movement opens with a short orchestral introduction that firmly establishes the key of D \flat major for the First Theme and highlights a semitone dissonance that will be prominent throughout the movement (see Figure 3.6). This semitone dissonance, an Armenian influence attributed to the tuning of folk instruments, occurs in every measure of the introduction, whether in the same octave or as a compound interval. The bass-line contains two chromatic descents, both ending on D \flat . The first descent is deceptive, ending on a D \flat minor-major seventh chord, while the second descent reaches a point of arrival on a D \flat major chord.

The First Theme is introduced by the piano from mm. 11-37, with the orchestra as accompaniment, and is repeated in the orchestra in mm. 46-60 while the piano accompanies on a D \flat pedal point. Figure 3.7 is an excerpt of the First Theme with solo piano and orchestral reduction. There is a bridge between the piano statement of the First Theme and the orchestral statement of the theme. The first two measures of the First Theme utilize the rhythmic motive found in Figure 3.3, and the pattern is accentuated through a quarter rest between repetitions.

Figure 3.6 First Movement orchestral introduction mm. 1-6 downbeat highlighting semitone dissonance

Allegro ma non troppo e maestoso ♩ = 108 - 116

The Bridge between the First and Second Themes starts with piano solo on new material consisting of continuous sixteenth notes, mm. 61-64. The orchestra enters following this piano solo, modulating through various keys with First Theme material through mm. 65-89. The piano accompanies these measures with virtuosic passages.

The Second Theme is presented in a way that is uncommon among movements in sonata form concerti. It is divided into two sections: an orchestral solo from mm. 90-117 and a piano solo from mm. 118-174. In addition, the key of the Second Theme, E \flat minor (ii), is an unusual key area for a Second Theme in sonata form in relation to the home key of D \flat . During the orchestral statement the theme has an F bass pedal point in the accompaniment, while the piano statement has a D \flat bass pedal point, alluding to the home key. The climax of the Second Theme is in m. 144 where the bass pedal point

resolves to an Eb, which unifies it with the key of this section. There is no interaction between the orchestra and the piano.

Figure 3.7 First Theme excerpt mm. 11-22

The musical score for Figure 3.7, First Theme excerpt mm. 11-22, is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 11-14) features Piano and Orch. Reduction staves. The Piano part is marked *f pesante* and the Orch. Reduction is marked *ff* and *mp*. The second system (mm. 15-18) features Pno. and Orch. staves. The Pno. part is marked *f* and the Orch. part is marked *mp*. The third system (mm. 19-22) features Pno. and Orch. staves. The Pno. part is marked *p* and the Orch. part is marked *p*. The score is in 3/4 time and features complex harmonic textures with many accidentals.

The Second Theme follows the Armenian rhythmic motive in Figure 3.1 and the reversal of the order as shown in Figure 3.2. This is found in the melodic pulse, taking

away the melodic embellishments such as passing tones and neighbour tones and is shown in Figure 3.8. The line beneath the oboe in Figure 3.8 has been added to demonstrate the rhythmic pulse of the melodic line and its similarity to Figures 3.1 and 3.2 and is not part of the score. The ending figure of the first phrase in m. 97 exhibits the rhythmic motive in Figure 3.3, which is not unlike certain phrase endings in Armenian folk songs, such as the one found in Figure 3.9. In this Figure, which is a musical example of an Armenian folk song from Komitas's ethnological collection Vol. II and printed in Harpik Der Hovhannissian's dissertation,²⁷¹ the rhythmic pulse of the melodic line has been added and is not part of the example given by Der Hovhannissian.

Figure 3.8 oboe solo, Second Theme of First Movement of Piano Concerto, mm. 90-97²⁷²

90 a tempo
I. Ob. Solo
f espress.
Rhythmic Pulse
sf

Figure 3.9 from Harpik Der Hovhannissian, a musical example from Komitas's ethnological collection Vol. II²⁷³

Rhythmic Pulse

²⁷¹ Der Hovhannissian, "Armenian Music", 101.

²⁷² Aram Il'yich Khachaturian, *Concerto for Piano with Orchestra* (London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd., 1946).

²⁷³ Der Hovhannissian, "Armenian Music", 101.

Der Hovhannissian writes that this Armenian song (top line of Figure 3.9) is based on a tetrachord that is similar to the Greek Dorian tetrachord.²⁷⁴ This melody presents multiple similarities to the Second Theme by Khachaturian. The last measure of this melody features the closing rhythmic motive similar to Khachaturian's Second Theme from the First Movement (m.97) and the main Theme of the Second Movement (first heard in m. 16). However, the direction in which the notes move in this last measure is reversed. The melody is also based on the rhythmic motive of Figure 3.3. Another similarity is the deviation from the rhythmic paradigm in m. 7 of the folk song, whose equivalent in the Khachaturian is found in m. 95. Both phrases are eight measures long, and this deviation occurs only once in each of them, near the end of the phrase. Both phrases also include frequent alternations between a long-short and short-long rhythmic pulse, similar to the rhythmic motives found Figures 3.1 and 3.2. The analysis of the rhythmic pulses of both of these melodies is similar.

The Codetta of the Exposition remains in E \flat minor and is in the piano only. The first four notes in the right hand of the piano (E \flat , G \flat , A, B \flat) are repeated at the start of the Development in the orchestra. This four-note motive plays a large part in the beginning of the Development section in mm. 182-202.

The Development section is more rhythmically energetic than the Exposition. Both the piano and the orchestra are equally active and alternate functions of melody and accompaniment. There are five main sections of the Development that are defined by changes of mood and thematic content. The first three sections correspond to changes in pedal points (C \flat , E, and F \sharp). The fourth section features a change in tempo to *Poco più*

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

mosso e stretto in tempo and the final section is the retransition to the Recapitulation. The retransition is an extended version of the Introduction and does not feature a strong dominant harmony. Only in mm. 295-6 there is dominant harmony, which is well before the arrival of the First Theme in m. 307.

The First Theme in the Recapitulation section is very similar to the Exposition, with only slight differences. The Bridge of the Recapitulation uses material that links the piano statement of the First Theme to the orchestra statement of the First Theme, originally in mm. 37-45, not the material from the Exposition Bridge. Instead of repeating the First Theme in the orchestra after the piano statement of the Theme, as in the Exposition, the Second Theme follows. The Second Theme of the Recapitulation also differs from the Exposition in that both the piano and orchestra are playing together during the entire section alternating the Theme between orchestra and piano. The Theme in the Recapitulation is the same as the Exposition, but the piano features new material in the accompaniment during the orchestral statements of the Theme. Another difference is that the pedal point is on the tonic $D\flat$. The Codetta of the Recapitulation is orchestra only on Second Theme material with a $G\flat$ bass pedal point. The Codetta ends on dominant harmony, the notes outline a leading tone diminished triad (vii^o) of $D\flat$ major.

The Cadenza is virtuosic, uses material from both Themes, and has an improvisatory quality. The beginning of the Cadenza features the rhythmic motive of Figure 3.3 (see Figure 3.10). This motive uses the same melodic intervals and notes (an octave lower) as the end of the Second Theme phrase (see Figure 3.8 m. 97). It is stated five times during mm. 401-2 before developing into virtuosic sixteenth-notes in the right hand. The prominence of this motive at the beginning of the Cadenza gives the

impression that the following sixteenth-note passages develop from this rhythmic motive. It is stated again in the same note values in m. 408, but different pitches. There is a change of character in m. 414, marked *espressivo e poco rubato*. The melody of this section begins with the same notes as m. 408, two octaves higher, and is an augmentation of the rhythmic motive found at the beginning of the Cadenza (Figure 3.11). Throughout the Cadenza, this rhythmic motive is stated many times with these note values²⁷⁵ before it is further augmented in m. 459 (see Figure 3.12). The prominent role that the motive has in the Cadenza, which was first heard in the Second Theme, creates stylistic unity within the First Movement, and, it returns in the Second Movement, where it is heard in the A theme. This gives the rhythmic motive more significance whenever it is heard throughout the concerto.

Figure 3.10 First Movement Cadenza mm. 401-5

The musical score for Figure 3.10 shows the first five measures of the Cadenza. It is written in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of two flats (B-flat major). The tempo is marked 'Vivo' and the dynamic is 'mp'. The lyrics 'cre - - - scen - - - do' are written below the notes. The score features a rhythmic motive of eighth notes with accents, which is augmented in subsequent measures.

²⁷⁵ This happens in mm. 414-17, 419-23, 425-28, 436, 445, 455, 457.

Figure 3.11 First Movement Cadenza mm.414-15

Figure 3.12 First Movement Cadenza mm. 459-60

The Coda is short and built on the three-note motive that defines the First Theme. The Theme is in the orchestra while the piano accompanies with a dense chordal texture that has a similar rhythmic pattern found in the piano accompaniment in mm. 46-54 (during the orchestral statement of the First Theme in the Exposition). The last four measures reinforce the three-note motive with a broader tempo (*a tempo, ma più maestoso*) and a *tutti* octave doubling.

3.3 Second Movement

The Second Movement, *Andante con anima*, is in Ternary Form and features the flexatone, which is heard in mm. 33-56, doubling the melody in the strings. Many

Khachaturian scholars agree that the Second Movement stands out from the other two movements,²⁷⁶ called “the inspired middle movement,”²⁷⁷ with refreshing choice of textures.²⁷⁸ The main theme of this movement is based on a folk melody from the Transcaucasus (Figure 3.4). The ends of phrases in the A theme include the same rhythmic motive as in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.8, from the Second Theme of the First Movement and from the Cadenza, which is an additional reference to Armenian folk music.

Second Movement – *Andante con anima*
Ternary Form

Section	Measure Number	Key
A	1-59 (1-83) ²⁷⁹	A minor
B	60-148 (84-172) B1 60-84 (84-108) B2 85-101 (109-25) B3 102-48 (126-72)	B2 - E \flat major to A \flat minor (ambiguous) B2 – C \sharp major (ambiguous) B3 – starts in E minor with a C \sharp pedal point throughout, ends with a E major-major seventh chord (dominant of A minor)

²⁷⁶ Shneerson, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 42.

²⁷⁷ Mannick, “Aram Khachaturian”, 116.

²⁷⁸ Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 226.

²⁷⁹ The first set of measure numbers refers to the piano reduction of the score, which include repeat signs. The second set of measure numbers refers to the full orchestral score, which does not include repeat signs and instead the repeat is written in full.

A'	149-204 (173-236)	A minor
----	-------------------	---------

The movement begins with a short orchestral introduction, mm. 1-8, which establishes the mood and the key of A minor. The first statement of the A theme is in the piano with the orchestra as accompaniment in mm. 9-24 (mm. 9-40).²⁸⁰ In mm. 25-32 (mm.41-48) the introductory material from mm. 1-8 is repeated at the end of the piano statement of the A theme, this time in the piano alone. This leads to the orchestra repetition of the A theme with piano accompaniment, mm. 33-56 (mm. 49-80). The orchestra statement of the theme includes the flexatone, which has not yet been heard in the concerto. The rhythmic motive that ends the phrases of the A theme (see Figure 3.5 m. 16) is the same rhythmic motive as depicted in Figure 3.3, although in shorter note values to compensate for the slower tempo of the movement. This suggests that the Armenian sound of the theme could be, in part, attributed to this rhythmic motive. This is also found in the First Movement, as shown in Figure 3.8 m. 97 and the Cadenza. Following the second statement of the A theme is the bridge to the B section, mm. 57-59 (mm. 81-83).

Section B is comprised of three distinct sections (B1, B2, B3) that are each based on short melodic fragments taken from section A. The first section, B1 mm. 60-84 (mm. 84-108), begins with a tempo change *Poco più mosso* and is based on the melody in mm. 9-10 of theme A (see Figure 3.13). The fragment is heard twice in sequential manner, the first time on B \flat , the second time starting on C. In addition to the melody, the inner voices

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

behave the same way as they do in theme A, sustaining the first note of the melodic fragment, which causes a semitone dissonance followed by a whole tone dissonance. Finally, the rhythm of this fragment is the same as in the piano melody of mm. 9-10, which strengthens the thematic unity between section A and B.

Figure 3.13 Second Movement section B mm. 84-86 beat 2 of the orchestral score

The musical score for Figure 3.13 shows two staves: Violin I and Violin II. The time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Poco più mosso' with 'vibrato' and 'pp espress.' dynamics. The Violin I part begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The first measure (mm. 84-86) shows a melodic line starting with a sustained note, followed by a sequence of notes. The Violin II part is mostly silent, with a few notes in the lower register. Both parts end with a 'cresc.' marking.

The second section, B2, mm. 85-101 (mm. 109-125), also begins with a tempo change *Poco meno mosso*, and also contains a sequence of two repetitions, but this time with new material. The last five measures are a bridge between this section and the next section, B3. The last section, B3, mm. 102-48 (mm. 126-72), returns to *Tempo I* (see Figure 3.14). The rhythmic pulse has been added to Figure 3.14 to illustrate the connection with the Armenian rhythmic motive in Figure 3.2. This section has a constant pedal point on C# except for the last four measures, which arrive on the dominant of A minor, preparing for the return of the A section. Because of the pedal point, this section does not have the sequential effect of B1 and B2, and instead feels like a dominant preparation, not unlike a retransition in a sonata form movement. The thematic basis of the melody is loosely derived from mm. 11-12 of section A.

Figure 3.14 Second Movement mm. 128-131 of the orchestral score with rhythmic pulse added

The image shows a musical score for measures 128-131. The top staff is for Flute I solo, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with various articulations. The bottom staff is labeled 'Rhythmic Pulse' and contains a simple rhythmic pattern of quarter notes on a bass clef staff.

The return of section A is also the climax of the movement, mm. 149-72 (mm. 173-204). The climax releases the tension created by the pedal point in section B3 and is achieved by a four measure dominant preparation (of A minor) in the orchestra with virtuosic ascending alternating octaves in the piano, similar to the end of the Cadenza of the First Movement. As a result of this, there is no orchestral introduction to the theme, as in the opening of the movement. This section also differs from the original A section by the *fff appassionato*, and the dense, chordal texture in the piano writing, which is more suitable for a *fff* dynamic. There is only one statement of the theme with the first half featuring the melody in the piano, and the second half the melody in the orchestra. After this climactic statement of theme A, there are four measures of cadenza-like material, mm. 173-7 (mm. 205-8). This leads into an expanded restatement of the second half of theme A, mm. 177-183 (mm. 209-15), originally heard in mm. 21-24. The bridge material found in mm. 57-9 is again used in this section, mm. 184-7 (mm. 216-19), but this time leads into the Coda. The Coda, mm. 188-204 (mm. 220-236), uses the introductory material from mm. 1-8 and features mainly the orchestra, with a brief piano interjection in the second last bar of the movement.

3.4 Third Movement

The form of this movement is Ternary, marked *Allegro brillante*; however, the placement of the Cadenza before the return of A is unusual and disrupts the flow of a Ternary form. Having a cadenza in this movement is unexpected in that it is unusual, but not unique, to have two cadenzas within a concerto. Also, the return of the First Theme of the First Movement provides a Coda for the entire concerto, and not just for this movement. This movement has also received the greatest amount of criticism.²⁸¹

Upon studying the score, one finds that many instances of Khachaturian's unique style become apparent and stylistic connections can be drawn between the Third Movement and the first two movements. His distinctive sound is maintained through the dissonant second intervals, pedal points, changing meters, and in the improvisatory and rhapsodic lyricism of the cadenza that contrasts with the brilliant and energetic toccata-like themes. The return of the First Theme of the First Movement at the Coda and its combination with the A Theme of the Third Movement creates a substantial climax and provides finality to not only the Third Movement, but to the entire work.

²⁸¹ Yuzefovich writes, "the Finale would have been stronger without the recapitulation of the main subject of the first movement. The music of the Finale was justly criticized as being too wordy." (Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 103) The music has also been criticised as being simple, lacking in emotional depth, "in it there are many 'common places', much instrumental 'chatter', outwardly brilliant and even ingenious, but its content not very significant." (Mannick, "Aram Khachaturian", 123) According to Khubov, the failings of this movement are caused by Khachaturian trying to simulate Prokofiev's style, "in the finale, all too obvious is the influence of Prokofiev's dry 'toccata' pianism. And this influence, foreign to the creative nature of Khachaturian, certainly does not lend itself to the strengthening of stylistic unity in his Piano Concerto." (Mannick, "Aram Khachaturian", 125)

Third Movement – *Allegro brillante*
Ternary Form with an added Cadenza before A'

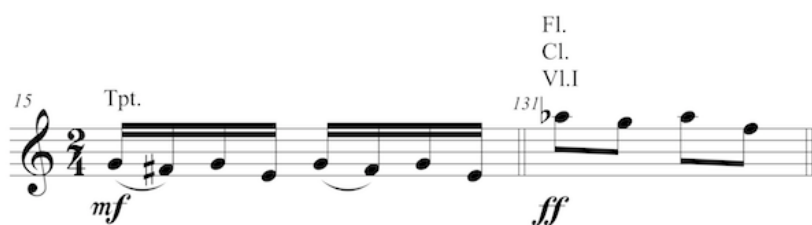
Section	Measure	Key
A	1-68	C major
Transition	68-130	B \flat major (mm. 68-108) C pedal point (mm. 124-130)
B	131-196	F minor
Cadenza	197-255	
A'	256-347	F major (mm. 256-291) C major (mm. 292-339)
Coda	340-434	D \flat major

Section A of the Third Movement is in C major and characterised as toccata style because of its quick tempo, dry articulation, and perpetual rhythmic forward momentum. This section opens with introductory material, mm. 1-14, and theme A follows in the orchestra mm. 15-22. There is a bridge after the orchestral statement of theme A, followed by the piano statement of theme A, mm. 30-68. The Transition to Section B begins with sequential material that repeats once, mm. 68-77. The Transition climaxes in mm. 124-30 with a virtuosic piano display over a C pedal point, which is the dominant of the next section.

Section B is in F minor and consists of two motivically related themes (B1 and B2). The thematic material from B1, mm. 131-48, is based on an augmentation of the

short four-note motive that is the basis of theme A (see Figure 3.15). There is a transition to B2 in mm. 149-52. In theme B2, mm. 157-96, the piano has the melody. This statement of the theme has a broader feel and is marked *espress. e fervore*. The longer note values of the piano melody as well as the hemiola pattern in the orchestra accompaniment create a rhapsodic feel to this section and contribute to the feeling of musical expansion. The orchestral accompaniment is a hemiola version of the accompaniment from theme B1.

Figure 3.15 Third Movement theme A m. 15 followed by theme B1 m. 131



The piano Cadenza follows section B, mm. 197-255. This Cadenza contrasts with the Cadenza from the First Movement in that there are less driving rhythms and more rhapsodic writing. There is more of an introspective quality to this Cadenza.

After the Cadenza, there is the return of section A, this time in F major in mm. 256-91. It is a false arrival of section A since it is in a different key from the first statement of A. The piano, which has the melody, only has short fragments of the section A melody. There is a true arrival of the Section A theme in the original key of C major in m. 292. The orchestral accompaniment has a hemiola pattern in mm. 317-336.

The Coda, in D \flat major, serves as a Coda for the entire Concerto as it brings back the First Theme from the First Movement in the climax of the Third Movement. The

Coda starts with dominant preparation of $D\flat$ from mm. 340-7 and brings back the three-note motive of the First Theme, finally arriving with the First Theme in mm. 348-87.

There is a return to Third Movement Section A material in mm. 388-416. The Concerto ends with the First Theme of the First Movement in mm. 417-34.

This movement does not contain any discernible Armenian influences other than certain sounds that are indicative of Khachaturian's style, such as bass pedal points, changing meters, and improvisatory writing. The toccata style takes precedence over folk influences.

Just as this concerto exhibits the tension between using Eastern and Western musical influences, it also shows the tension between tradition and innovation. Khachaturian's choice of formal structures for the first two movements are conventional and contain all of the required sections of sonata form and ternary form. Within the First Movement, the key area for the Second Theme is unexpected in Sonata Form and the retransition to the Recapitulation does not prepare the key of the Recapitulation with a dominant. There is strong thematic unity between the First and Second Movements because of the rhythmic motive that was especially prominent in the Cadenza of the First Movement. Khachaturian creates contrast between these two movements through mood, textures, and orchestration, but his thematic unity adds to the cyclical nature of the whole work. The return of the First Movement theme in the final movement confirms this work as cyclical. The form of the Third Movement is unusual because of the placement of the Cadenza before the return of A rather than near the end of the movement. The choice of C major for the start of the Third Movement, knowing that it must end in $D\flat$ major, is

irregular. C major is the relative major of the key of the Second Movement, which provides continuity between the movements. Khachaturian's choice to utilize conventional forms for the movements reveals his traditional approach to form while his harmonic language and melodic influences provide innovation to the genre.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to emphasize the significance of Aram Khachaturian through a theoretical and historical analysis of his Piano Concerto in D \flat major.

Khachaturian is an important composer for several reasons. He is the most well-known composer of Armenian music and brought it to the international stage. He is also considered one of the most successful composers to come out of the Soviet Union, and his music has left a lasting impact on the concert and piano repertory. Finally, by combining Eastern and Western elements, he was able to create a unique musical style.

The analysis of the concerto reveals how efficiently Khachaturian utilizes motives, demonstrating his skill as a composer. While there is strong thematic unity between all three movements, Khachaturian creates contrast in mood and character between the movements through differences in rhythmic energy, texture, and irregular key areas, while still maintaining his unique musical language.

The first movement uses conventional sonata form, with unconventional key areas. The Second Theme is presented in an irregular way, with the orchestra presented first, followed by solo piano. The improvisatory character of Khachaturian's style is heard in the piano's repetition of the Second Theme, and this is in part due to the added embellishments. The Cadenza builds on a very short rhythmic motive, found in the Second Theme, that can be linked to Armenian folk music.

The second movement presents a contrasting character to the first, and is said by Khachaturian to be based on a Transcaucasus melody. It contains the short rhythmic motive that the Cadenza of the first movement is built on. The second movement features

a haunting new instrument, the flexatone, which contributes to the introspective character.

The third and final movement is lively, with a toccata-like perpetual motion. It contains an unexpected cadenza, which, in contrast to the first movement's cadenza, is more rhapsodic in character rather than rhythmically based. The return of the First Theme from the first movement in the Coda makes this work cyclical and gives more meaning to the shared material between movements.

Khachaturian's innovative music achieved success early in his career; however, only certain pieces remain popular worldwide. The popularity of the Piano Concerto proves that Khachaturian's music is well received by audiences, and it is logical that his lesser-known works would also receive the same enthusiasm if they were only played more often. The analysis presented in this study uncovers important elements of the Concerto, forming an important foundation on which a performer may shape their interpretation of not only this work, but also other works by Khachaturian. There is not much written about Khachaturian's music in English, and the hopeful expectation of this study is that more scholars and performers will take a broader interest in his music.

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Appendix A: Selective Discography

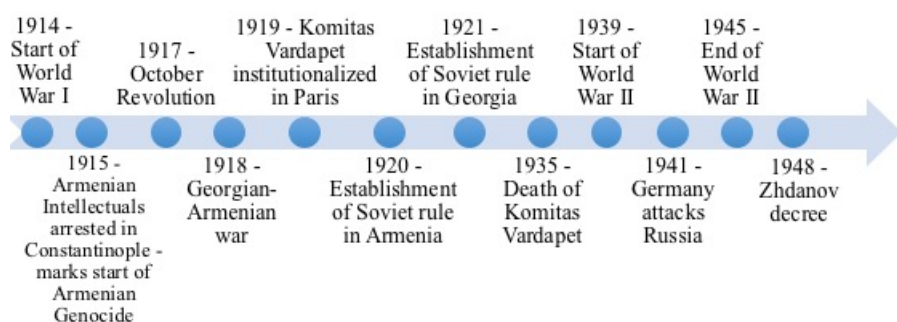
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Appendix B: Khachaturian Timelines

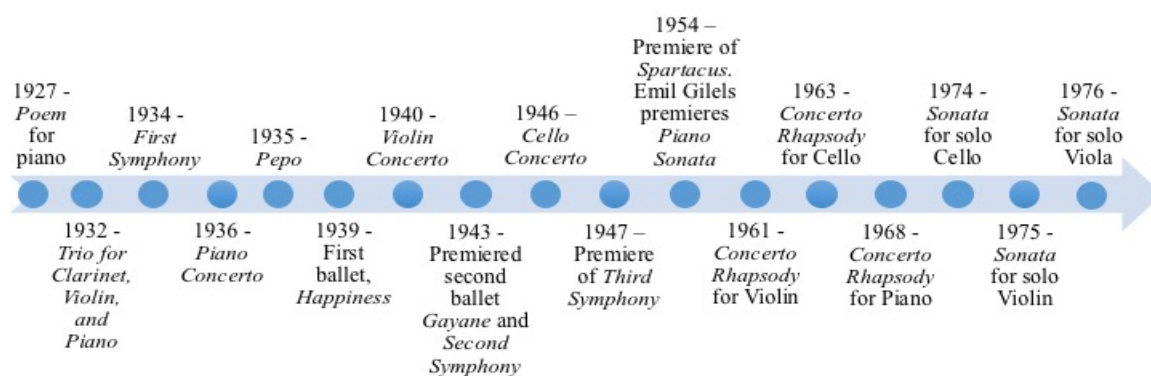
Khachaturian Biographical Timeline



Important Relevant Historical and Soviet Events



Timeline of Major Works by Khachaturian



Appendix C-1: Performance Event Program February 2014

Saturday, February 1, 2014
4:00pm, von Kuster Hall
Sarah Dardarian, *piano*

Transcendental Etude No. 11, “Harmonies du Soir”

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

Sonata in F-sharp major, Op. 78
Adagio cantabile – Allegro ma non troppo
Allegro vivace

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Intermission

Sonata in B-flat major, D. 960
Molto moderato
Andante sostenuto
Scherzo
Allegro, ma non troppo

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts (solo piano) degree.

Appendix C-2: Performance Event Program February 2015

February 1, 2015
2 p.m., von Kuster Hall
Sarah Dardarian, *piano*
Edgar Suski, *piano*

Sonata in F, KV 497
Adagio, Allegro di molto
Andante
Allegro
W. Mozart
(1756-1791)

Concerto for Two Solo Keyboards, BWV 1061a
(no tempo marking)
Adagio ovvero Largo
Fuga
J.S. Bach
(1685-1750)

-Intermission-

Sonata in F minor, op. 34 bis.
Allegro non troppo
Andante, un poco Adagio
Scherzo: Allegro
Finale: poco sostenuto
J. Brahms
(1833-1897)

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Doctor of Musical Arts (solo piano) degree.*

Appendix C-3: Performance Event Program March 2016

March 11, 2016
4 p.m., von Kuster Hall
Sarah Dardarian, *piano*

Fantaisie, Op. 49

F. Chopin
(1810-1849)

Sonata in F minor, Op. 57 “Appassionata”

L. Beethoven
(1770-1827)

- I. Allegro assai
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Allegro ma non troppo – Presto

-Intermission-

Piano Sonata (1961)

A. Khachaturian
(1903-1978)

- I. Allegro vivace
- II. Andante tranquillo
- III. Allegro assai

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Musical Arts (solo piano) degree.*

Appendix C-4: Performance Event Program September 2016

Saturday, September 24, 2016
12:00, von Kuster Hall
Sarah Dardarian, *piano*
Edgar Suski, *piano*

Piano Concerto in D flat major
Allegro ma non troppo e maestoso
Andante con anima
Allegro brillante

A. Khachaturian
(1903-1978)

*This lecture recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Musical Arts (solo piano) degree.*

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Sarah Dardarian

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: University of Toronto
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2006-2010 B. Mus.

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2010-2012 M. Mus.

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