

*Trio in G Minor (1932)*

Aram Khachaturian

*Andante con dolore, con molto espressione*

*Allegro*

*Moderato*

The *Trio in G Major* is a tone poem without a specific program. It evokes colorful images reminiscent of the perfumed exotic charm of *Tales from the Arabian Nights* through the use of quiet melancholy themes as well as wild and colorful whirlwind dances. The following description of the *Trio* was written by Patsy Morita for AllMusic ([www.allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com)):

Khachaturian was still a student of Myaskovsky at the Moscow Conservatory in the early 1930s when he wrote this trio for clarinet, violin, and piano, and yet it displays the same rhythmic and harmonic devices that mark his mature works. What first distinguishes Khachaturian's *Clarinet Trio* from nearly all others written earlier, such as Mozart's, Beethoven's or Brahms', is his use of the violin rather than the mellower-sounding viola or cello. The higher-sounding string instrument becomes more of a partner to the clarinet, sharing the melodic duties throughout the piece. In three movements, the *Trio* displays Khachaturian's trademark use of cross rhythms, folk songs, and harmonies that could be thorny at some times or bittersweet at others. The opening *Andante con dolore, con molto espressione* is a duet for the clarinet and violin, almost improvisational, with the piano accompaniment adding a complex layer seemingly in rhythmic conflict with the other instruments. It takes extremely skilled ensemble players to make it sound right. The middle *Allegro* is very obviously modeled on folk dances, with rich color and precise rhythms. The *Moderato* finale is a set of variations on an Uzbekistani folk song, effectively contrasting the timbres of the instruments and showing off the clarinet as folk instrument. Prokofiev was so impressed with this piece that he was able to see that it was performed and published in Paris soon after it was completed.

Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978) studied at the Moscow Conservatory and emerged as one of the most popular and successful composers of the Soviet period. Among his early works were the *Piano Concerto* which brought him international acclaim, the equally successful *Violin Concerto*, and the *Trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano*.

In 1937, Khachaturian became active in the newly founded Union of Soviet Composers, and when the Union came under attack in 1948, he was one of the group of censured composers, along with Prokofiev and Shostakovich. In Khachaturian's case, it was more guilt by association, for his colorful, nationally-tinged musical idiom was far removed from any modernistic excess. After Stalin's death in 1953, Khachaturian was the first among prominent musicians to plead publicly for fewer bureaucratic restraints and greater creative freedom.

Khachaturian's successful career represents the fulfillment of a basic Soviet arts policy: the combination of regional folklorist and the great Russian tradition. His native Armenian heritage is reflected in his languid melodies, stirring rhythms, and the pulsating vitality of his musical idiom. Not an innovator, he condemned musical experimentation; his music is straightforward and elemental in its appeal to human emotions.