



# FILM MUSIC CLASSICS

## Othello & Battle of Stalingrad

Suite  
1956

Suite  
1949

Classic Film Scores by

# ARAM KHACHATURIAN

Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra • Adriano



## Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978)

### Battle of Stalingrad • Othello

Khachaturian's contribution to cinema began as early as 1934 with his music for *Pepo*, the very first sound picture produced by the Armenian State Film Company. It was well received in Moscow and eventually helped the 31-year-old composer, known at that time for his *Song-Poem* (1929), his *Trio* (1932) and his *Dance Suite* (1933), to an introduction to Mosfilm Productions. In 1938, after the great Moscow success of his *First Symphony* (1934) and the international fame he won with his *Piano Concerto* (1936), Khachaturian was invited by Amo Bek-Nazarov, the director of *Pepo*, to provide a score for another Armenian film, a historic-revolutionary picture called *Zangezur*. From then on until 1960, the date, it seems, of his last film score, *Men and Animals* (a co-production between the Soviet Union and East Germany), he provided music for some fifteen more films, principally for Mosfilm. Among these we find six pictures directed by Mikhail Romm, *Man No. 217*, *The Russian Question*, *Secret Mission*, *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin* – this produced in 1948, the source of the composer's *Ode in Memory of Lenin* – and the two-part epic *Admiral Ushakov* and *Ships storming the Bastions* written in 1953, the source of a later concert suite.

Within the Soviet Union Khachaturian's film music always enjoyed considerable success after the publication of arrangements for band, voice, piano or chorus of more popular elements of the score. *Pepo's Song* and the *Zanzezur March* became an accepted part of folk tradition, eventually to be eclipsed in popularity by the *Sabre Dance* from *Gayaneh*. Meanwhile the composer's interest in Armenian folklore had increased considerably, leading him to undertake a large scale ballet, the first version of which, in 1939, had the title *Happiness*, which became *Gayaneh* three years later.

#### Battle of Stalingrad

For Vladimir Petrov, a prolific director in both the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, Khachaturian composed two film-scores, *Battle of Stalingrad* (1948-50) and *The Duel* (1957). On his

work for *Battle of Stalingrad*, a two-part epic lasting some 220 minutes, he wrote: *To fill two hours with battle-music alone! Nothing that I had done hitherto could be compared with that task – just as the battle itself surpassed in scope everything known to history until then. My task was, therefore, to compose battle-music with the barest minimum of contrasting episodes to set off the dominant mood. This film needed no lyricism, no songs and no digression from the main subject. A high degree of tension was the only thing needed.*

Contrary to what might generally have been expected in such a work, Khachaturian avoided any musical glorification of Stalin (played in the film by Alexis Diki) and concentrated on a dramatic emphasis of the tragic events shown on the screen, the struggle and suffering of the people rather than the position of the supreme commander. His own arrangement of *Battle of Stalingrad* into an eight-part concert suite gives the impression of a monumental symphonic fresco of tonal and thematic unity. As a theme to be associated with the city taking up its desperate defence against the German war-machine, Khachaturian quotes *There is a Cliff on the Volga*, a majestic folk-song, heard after the opening main theme. The German aggressors, on the other hand, are defined shortly afterwards by the German Christmas carol *O Tannenbaum*, transformed into a grotesque march, similar to the *Merry Widow* theme in Shostakovich's *Leningrad Symphony*, if not so incessantly repeated.

The most original movement of the suite is certainly the short *Eternal Glory to the Heroes*, in which Khachaturian builds up a tense climax by a funeral-march-like theme, surging from and dissolving itself again into a visionary dirge of alternating chords. *The Enemy is Doomed*, another lyrical movement containing longer sections for strings alone, interrupted by an echo-like quotation of the Nazi motif, is a typical example of the composer's skill in producing dramatic effect by minimal musical means.

Khachaturian himself, as a conductor of the USSR

Radio Symphony Orchestra, can be heard on an impressive Melodiya recording of *Battle of Stalingrad*, issued in 1952. The suite was arranged in 1969 for large band by Grigory Kalinkovich and issued on record in 1974. In 1976 the Art Ensemble of the Hungarian People's Army commissioned a further arrangement by the composer as an oratorio for soprano, male chorus and orchestra. Poems by Gabor Garai were inserted between the movements, to be read by a narrator. This arrangement was given the new title *In Memory of the Heroes* and a recording was issued by Hungaroton in 1978.

*Battle of Stalingrad* can be compared with *The Fall of Berlin*, a score by Shostakovich for a picture by Mikhail Chiaureli, realised in 1949, the same year as the first part of *Battle of Stalingrad*. Both films are, in the final analysis, mere glorifications of Stalin and today only their sound tracks are worthy of revival. The orchestration of *Battle of Stalingrad* includes piccolo, double woodwind, cor anglais, a third clarinet in E flat, bass clarinet, four horns and four trumpets, three percussion players and the usual strings.

## Othello

Three Russian films inspired by Shakespeare, and using the famous translations by Boris Pasternak, *Othello* (1955), *Hamlet* (1964) and *King Lear* (1970), won international fame also for their music, written by Khachaturian and by Shostakovich. In the early 1950s, after the so-called Stalin era, a new period in Soviet cinema began that allowed more varied and artistically valid forms of expression, but still under the directives of Socialist Realism. *Othello*, a colour film by Sergey Yutkevich, with script collaboration by Mikhail Romm, featuring Sergey Bondarchuk as Othello, Irina Skobtseyeva as Desdemona and Andrey Popov as Iago, and is one of the first notable and successful productions of the period. Stage music to *Macbeth* (1934) and *King Lear* (1958) complete the scores by Khachaturian inspired by Shakespeare.

The film-score of *Othello*, composed in 1955-56, between *Spartacus* and *Ode to Joy*, is available today in the form of an eleven-part suite, perhaps posthumously edited, differing from a shorter version arranged for piano by Emin Khachaturian and published by Sovetskaya

Muzyka in 1956. The latter included *Desdemona's Arioso*, *Willow Song* and Iago's *Soldier's Song*, the last two of which were regrettably omitted from the suite at a later date. In 1960 three symphonic movements, Nos. 1, 3 and 4 of the present suite, and later, in 1967, an additional dance number, also missing, were released on LP by Melodiya, conducted by Grigoriy Hamburg and Gennady Katz. It is not known whether printed scores had already been made available at that time. On the other hand the three vocal numbers with piano mentioned above were again made separately available in 1986 in Volume 24 of the collected works of Khachaturian, together with nine other vocal items from other film scores, with no indication as to whether these were still the adaptations of Emin Khachaturian or the work of the composer.

After having received the score of this 'official' version of the suite, the movements of which do not follow the chronological order of events in the film, I was disappointed by the absence of the remaining cues, including the figure-pieces for organ, Othello's marriage, the murder scene and the fanfares and dance-numbers, the last including parts for mandolin. It would have been preferable to have recorded this work in its complete form, but no manuscript was forthcoming from the Russian archives.

The original title of the opening movement [6] was *Prologue – Othello's Narrative*. It is the longest piece in the suite and unlike all the others contains a middle section not included in the final edited version of the film. Its lyrical violin solo is the leitmotif of Othello's noble and loving character; the following section accompanies an evocation of naval battle scenes and the recapitulation is intended as the apotheosis of love. Some of the musical cues of the sound track occur twice. *Venice* [9], a beautiful nocturne, can be heard once with oboe and once as a violin solo. *Vineyards* [8] is played first at break-neck speed during a drinking orgy, a central, darker, more *rubato* episode with saxophone suggesting a state of drunkenness, and later in the *Allegro giocoso* section of the movement, as Cassio introduces himself to Desdemona in the Vineyards scene. The first strophe of the *Arioso* (actually a *Vocalise*) follows in the same scene, when Iago starts drawing Othello's attention to his wife's apparent interest in Cassio, and is

heard later on in the film, when her blindly jealous husband sees Desdemona in the distance, sailing on a boat.

*Venice* and *Othello's Despair* [1] contain a typical Armenian motif, similar to the famous *Love Duet* from *Gayaneh*. The two short chorus sections recorded here [15]–[16] are actually the only ones heard on the film's soundtrack. In the finale of the film Khachaturian avoids a vulgar Hollywood style of climax. The bodies of Othello and Desdemona are brought by ship to Venice, while the initial D minor love motif is played again by the solo violin, the sound gradually dying away.

*Othello* is scored for a large symphony orchestra, including piccolo, double woodwind, cor anglais, tenor

saxophone and bass clarinet, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, a larger percussion section, harp and vibraphone, with the usual strings. There are, in addition, two shorter sections for mixed chorus and one for soprano solo.

In 1959 Khachaturian had the intention of composing a ballet on the subject of *Othello*, but he abandoned the project when he heard that the Georgian composer Alexey Machavariani had earlier completed his own ballet of the same title.

**Adriano**

*Edited by Keith Anderson*





Photo: Dan Oria

## Adriano

Swiss-born conductor-composer Adriano lives in Zürich. As a musician he is mostly self-taught. In the late 1970s he established himself as a specialist on Ottorino Respighi and he has conducted many other recordings of obscure or neglected symphonic repertoire. He also initiated and recorded a series of fifteen CDs mainly of European film music composers, and created and directed a series of classical music videos. All of his recording projects (45 in total) have found wide recognition and his commitment is totally dedicated and uncompromising. In his opinion, music history should be revised to show that it is not just the story of the so-called great composers, and that it should not be neatly classified into traditions and categories. Much more good music has been written than certain musicologists and critics would care to admit. Adriano's compositions include *Concertinos* (with string orchestra) for celesta, for harpsichord and for Ondes Martenot; a *Concertino for piano, strings and percussion*, *Obscure Saraband for organ, tubular bells, timpani and strings* and a clarinet quintet entitled *Thoughts and Associations*. His many instrumental adaptations include songs by Modest Mussorgsky (four cycles), Ottorino Respighi (five cycles), Johannes Brahms (*Vier ernste Gesänge*), Hugo Wolf, Othmar Schoeck, Jacques Ibert, Johann Strauss II and Louis Gruenberg. Ravel's *Tzigane* (premiered in Halle's Händel-Haus in 2013) also belongs to this list, as well as two different short versions of Antonín Dvořák's opera *Rusalka*, one for seven instruments and one for wind quintet (both including five to six singers only), the latter of which ran for 53 performances in the theatres of Krefeld and Mönchengladbach. Adriano's successful chamber group arrangement of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* for flute, clarinet, harp and string quartet has been performed in Switzerland, Germany, Italy and England by renowned artists. Adriano's homepage: [www.adrianomusic.com](http://www.adrianomusic.com)

## Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra

The Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1929 as the first professional musical ensemble fulfilling the needs of radio broadcasting in Slovakia. The first conductors already placed particular emphasis on contemporary Slovak music in their programmes, resulting in a close connection with leading Slovak composers, including Alexander Moyzes, Eugen Suchoň, Ján Cikker and others. The original ensemble was gradually enlarged and from 1942, thanks to Alexander Moyzes, the then Director of Music at Slovak Radio, regular symphony concerts were given, broadcast live by Slovak Radio. From 1943 to 1946 the Croatian Krešimír Baranovič was the chief conductor of the orchestra, to which he made a vital contribution. His successors were Ľudovít Rajter, Ladislav Slovák, Václav Jiráček, Otakar Trhlík, Bystrík Režucha and Ondrej Lenárd, whose successful performances and recordings from 1977 to 1990 helped the orchestra to establish itself as an internationally known concert ensemble. His successor Róbert Stankovsky continued this work until his unexpected death at the age of 36. Charles Olivieri-Munroe held the position of chief conductor from 2001 to 2003. Oliver von Dohnányi was chief conductor of the orchestra from 2006 to 2007, and regular live concerts have continued under the young Slovak conductor Mário Košík. Through its broadcasts and many recordings the orchestra has also become a part of concert life abroad, with successful tours to Austria, Italy, Germany, The Netherlands, France, Bulgaria, Spain, Japan, Great Britain and Malta.



*Photo: P. Kasti*



# FILM MUSIC CLASSICS

Playing  
Time  
63:36

**ARAM KHACHATURIAN**  
(1903–1978)

## **Battle of Stalingrad** **Othello**

Khachaturian's involvement in film, which began in Armenia as early as 1934, was long-lived and highly distinctive. Until 1960, the date of his last film, he wrote principally for Mosfilm and his scores, not least in subsequent arrangements, earned him considerable renown. His own eight-part concert suite arrangement taken from the epic *Battle of Stalingrad* (1948–50), is a symphonic fresco of high tension, fully befitting its subject matter. The suite derived from the score for *Othello* reveals the full canvas of Khachaturian's cinematic imagination, from glorious love music to darker scenes of despair.

**Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra**  
conducted by **Adriano**

### **Battle of Stalingrad** **(Suite, 1949)**

**29:48**

- 1** A City on the Volga – The Invasion 5:18
- 2** Stalingrad in Flames 4:01
- 3** The Enemy is Doomed 7:34
- 4** For Our Motherland; To the Attack! –  
Eternal Glory to the Heroes 6:35
- 5** To Victory –  
There is a Cliff on the Volga 6:11

### **Othello (Suite, 1956)**

**33:41**

- 6** Prologue and Introduction\* 8:44
- 7** Desdemona's Arioso† 3:14
- 8** Vineyards 3:45
- 9** Venice (Nocturne) 2:39
- 10** Nocturnal Murder (Roderigo's  
Death) 2:33
- 11** Othello's Despair 2:03
- 12** A Fit of Jealousy 2:06
- 13** Othello's Arrival 1:56
- 14** The Striking of Desdemona  
(The Slap) 0:55
- 15** Othello's Farewell from the Camp‡ 2:01
- 16** Finale\*‡ 3:39

Viktor Šimčíško, Solo Violin\*  
Jana Valášková, Soprano†  
Slovak Philharmonic Chorus‡

Recorded in the Concert Hall of Slovak Radio, Bratislava, 6–8 July 1989 (tracks 1–5) and  
22–24 June 1992 (6–16) • Producers: Martin Sauer (1–5); Emil Nižnansky (6–16)  
Engineers: Martin Sauer & Hubert Geschwandtner • Scores: Sovetskaya Muzyka, Moscow  
Music notes: Adriano (edited by Keith Anderson) • Previously released as Marco Polo 8.223314