



Kara  
**KARAYEV**

**Symphony No. 1**  
**Violin Concerto**

Janna Gandelman, Violin

Kiev Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra

Dmitry Yablonsky



## Kara Karayev (1918-1982)

### Symphony No. 1 in B minor · Violin Concerto

Kara Karayev was one of the most prominent 20th-century figures in the music of Azerbaijan. The first composer from that country to achieve international success, he may also be numbered among the foremost representatives of 'Soviet music'. Born in Baku on 5 February 1918, the young Kara soon showed a rare aptitude for music. At the age of eight he won a place at the junior music school of Baku State Conservatoire, studying piano with Georgi Sharoyev and composition with Leonid Rudolf. In 1938, he entered the Moscow State Conservatoire where he was a composition pupil of Anatoly Alexandrov. Karayev returned to Baku in 1941 and soon became artistic director of the Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Society. In 1944, he was named vice-chairman of the Union of Azerbaijani Composers. In the same year, he was once again admitted to the Moscow State Conservatoire. This time he attended classes given by Dmitry Shostakovich, who remained a lifelong friend and a staunch supporter of his music.

Karayev's illustrious career as a composer, conductor, ethnomusicologist, teacher, music writer, cultural ambassador, administrator and critic began in earnest after his return to Baku in 1946 as a graduate. In 1949, he became the director of the Azerbaijan State Conservatory and in this capacity he was to become a source of inspiration for a younger generation of home-grown musical talent. His death in Moscow on 13 May 1982 marked the end of a momentous era in Azerbaijani music.

A composer with a naturally eloquent style, Karayev imbued his compositions with the harmonies and melodic characteristics of his native Azerbaijani music, in particular the oriental intervals that derive from the centuries-old tradition of *mugam*, a highly improvisatory form of folk music. This paved the way for succeeding Azerbaijani composers. Karayev's prolific output features more than 100 works and ranges widely from operas, symphonies and ballet music, to cantatas and oratorios as well as film music, arrangements and lighter pieces, some for folk orchestra.

Karayev's *Symphony No. 1 in B minor* (1943) was significant in his own output and as one of the earliest significant contributions to the medium written by anyone in the South Caucasus region. Cast in two movements, this tautly dramatic piece requires a large orchestra, consisting of piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, cor anglais, three clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (side drum, cymbals and bass drum), xylophone, piano, harp and strings. Karayev uses these considerable forces judiciously, ensuring that passages for full orchestra are contrasted with delicately scored episodes.

The symphony begins with a slow, sustained introduction in which an expressive, folk-like melody for solo flute sets out thematic material that permeates the first movement. There follows an increasing series of elaborately scored variants on the tune before the main *Allegro* sweeps in. This is directly related to the music of the introduction and proceeds in a vigorously neo-Classical manner bristling with fugal writing. An insistent rhythmic figure leads to a sudden easing of tension and presages the arrival of the more lightly scored secondary material. This offers a welcome respite from the aggressive principal subject. Karayev's brief use of piccolo and lower strings in the second subject calls to mind the exploration of the outer reaches of the orchestral palette in the symphonic writing of his mentor Shostakovich. Disrupting this temporary idyll, the main *Allegro* bursts in again, grittier than ever and more starkly fugal in character. In a powerful climactic statement the rhythmic figure is hammered out in conjunction with the main theme. The ensuing reappearance of the lyrical second subject has a soothing effect on the music and the movement ends softly and ominously as stealthy pizzicato lower strings furtively remind us of the flute's opening theme.

After this impressive example of a tightly knit sonata form comes a satisfying counterweight in the guise of a substantial set of variations combining elements of

*scherzo* and finale. Marked *Lento moderato*, the introduction is dominated by a doleful melody for bassoons and low strings analogous to the theme for solo flute which launched the previous movement. In the fiercely parodic main section this opening idea is transformed into a succession of heavy-footed dances, including a lurching waltz. At the heart of the movement, muted strings and woodwind give out a serene and devotional version of the main theme, furnishing a brief moment of repose before the savagely ironic music returns. Just as a multi-decibel peroration seems to be in the offing, Karayev thins out the textures and steers the music into a calm and deeply poignant epilogue launched by sinuous woodwind solos. As the symphony draws to a close, the trumpets solemnly recall the finale's principal melody and a sustained piccolo note is terminated by a single soft but decisive pizzicato from the lower strings.

In 1961 Karayev visited the United States for the first time as part of a select Soviet delegation. During this trip he met Stravinsky in Los Angeles and this encounter resulted in a notable shift in Karayev's musical style. The *Symphony No. 3* of 1964 was one of the first fruits of this new aesthetic direction. In it, Karayev uses serialism, making him one of the earliest composers in the Soviet Union to adopt what was then regarded by the state as a hostile ideology. Serial techniques also feature in his *Violin Concerto*. The concerto, written in 1967, the same year in which he won the Lenin Prize for his second ballet score, *The Path of Thunder*, was premiered in 1968 by soloist Leonid Kogan at the Moscow State Conservatoire in a concert celebrating Karayev's 50th birthday.

Idiomatic and inventive, the solo line has the authority and fluency of a composer who has gained wide experience of writing for the violin. In fact, Karayev had already written a four-movement sonata for the instrument in 1960 and his output contains other chamber pieces with an important role for the violin such as the two string quartets (1942, 1946).

The three movements of the *Violin Concerto* are strikingly diverse in their instrumentation. Thus, the orchestral accompaniment in the *Allegro moderato* opening movement dispenses with woodwind and brass altogether and consists principally of strings with occasional interpolations from harp, piano and timpani and a single tam-tam stroke at a climactic moment. At the outset, the soloist introduces the twelve-tone row upon which much of the rest of the work is built. At the centre of the movement is a mini-cadenza, though not designated as such. Catching the ear near the end of the movement is a sequence of descending trills from the soloist in high register over richly scored, hushed string chords.

Woodwind instruments, suppressed in the previous movement, assume a key role in the central *Andante*. Over a solemn chorale, the soloist begins an expressive threnody which unfolds in a long-breathed span. Orchestral textures are filled out at the core of this affecting processional but in the concluding section the woodwind again provide piquant support for the solo line's understated eloquence.

The *Allegro* finale is a sardonic march with brass and percussion taking centre stage. The solo violin also first appears in the guise of a percussive instrument before developing the melodic potential of its elemental, fanfare-like material. The concerto's official cadenza occurs in the middle of the movement. This substantial soliloquy is a probing meditation on the work's thematic material as well as a showcase for the soloist's virtuosity and musicality. After the cadenza the martial music returns, its militaristic menace compounded. Towards the end of the movement Karayev introduces the distinctive sound of bongos, a striking and unexpected textural shift. Tension increases during the final rush and the concerto closes emphatically in a bravura gesture far removed from the tender, ruminative phrases with which it began.

Paul Conway

## Janna Gandelman

Photo © IClassical Academy



Janna Gandelman was born in Kishinev, Moldavia in 1967. She started violin lessons at the age of five and won numerous competitions in the former Soviet Union. After immigration to Israel in 1979 she continued her studies and was accepted to be a part of the American-Israel Cultural Foundation, performing in many countries around the world and winning several competitions. Gandelman has been a member of many acclaimed music ensembles in Israel as well as being concertmaster of the Israel Camerata, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra and the Flemish Chamber Orchestra. As a soloist, she has performed with many great conductors including Gary Bertini, Asher Fisch and Mendi Rodan; and with Gidon Kremer, Isaac Stern, Eliso Virsaladze and Sol Gabetta as a chamber musician. Janna Gandelman has given masterclasses all over the world and teaches at Jerusalem Conservatory Hassadna and Nazareth Conservatory. Since 2017 she has taught at the Buchman-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University. Gandelman plays a J.B. Guadagnini loaned generously by the Yehuda Zisapel Foundation.

## Kiev Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra

Artistic Director and Chief Conductor: Dmitry Yablonsky



Based in the capital of Ukraine, the Kiev Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra has earned national and international recognition by both listeners and critics around the world as one of the country's leading orchestral ensembles. With an average age of 30, this youthful orchestra unites talented musicians from all over Ukraine, most of whom are winners of various competitions. The ensemble gained its reputation by popularising the music of Western composers in Ukraine, as well as enjoying a very close collaboration with such outstanding contemporary composers as Krzysztof Penderecki, Valentin Silvestrov, Myroslav Skoryk, and others. The orchestra's unique sound and virtuosity have attracted many internationally acclaimed soloists and conductors to appear with them over the years. The Kiev Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra bring their high level of artistry together with their Ukrainian pride to a wide range of audiences. Their recent tours have taken them to countries such as Switzerland, France, Spain and Azerbaijan, among others.

## Dmitry Yablonsky



Dmitry Yablonsky, a GRAMMY®-nominated cellist and conductor, was born in Moscow into a musical family. He began playing the cello when he was five years old and was accepted into the Central Music School for Gifted Children. At the age of nine he made his orchestral debut playing Haydn's *Cello Concerto*. Since then his career has taken him to some of the most celebrated stages in the world, such as Carnegie Hall, La Scala, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, St Petersburg Philharmonic Hall, Taiwan National Hall, Théâtre Mogador, the Cité de la Musique and the Louvre, among others. As a conductor he has collaborated with many major orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Novoya Rossiya, the National Chamber Ensemble 'Kiev Virtuosi', the Israel Symphony Orchestra, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the Belgian National Orchestra, the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, the North Netherlands Orchestra, the Maastricht Orchestra, the Russian State Orchestra, the Orchestre National d'Île de France, the Taiwan National Orchestra, the Catania Opera Orchestra, the Holland Symphonica, the Bologna Chamber Orchestra, and the Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM (OFUNAM), Mexico. In 2010 Dmitry Yablonsky received the Diploma of Honorary Academician at the Independent Academy of Liberal Arts at the Russian Academy of Sciences. He has transcribed and edited works for cello, which have been published by the International Music Company and Dover Publications. In 2008 Naxos released his recording of all 40 Popper *Etudes* for solo cello (8.557718–19), to critical acclaim. In 2016 Yablonsky was named Distinguished Artistic Personality of Azerbaijan. He teaches at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University, Israel and

was appointed Head of International Relations in 2017. He is an enthusiastic and charismatic leader, initiating many projects and organising festivals including the Qabala Festival in Azerbaijan and the Wandering Stars Festival, which takes place in a variety of countries such as Israel, Italy, Russia and the United States. He plays two cellos, a Joseph Filius Andrea Guarneri and a Matteo Gofriller.

[www.dmitryablonsky.com](http://www.dmitryablonsky.com)

Kara Karayev was one of the most prominent figures in the music of 20th-century Azerbaijan, and an inspiration to subsequent generations of Azerbaijani composers. His eloquently expressive and tautly dramatic *First Symphony* is a significant work in Karayev's output, reflecting both the harmonies and melodic characteristics of the South Caucasus region and, in its orchestral brilliance, the influence of his mentor Shostakovich. The *Violin Concerto* shows a notable shift in style, exploring the serial techniques that add astringency and inventive depth to Karayev's already richly coloured and vividly diverse palette.



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(1918–1982)

	<b>Symphony No. 1 in B minor (1943)</b>	<b>33:40</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>I. Molto sostenuto. Allegro</b>	<b>15:08</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>II. Lento moderato</b>	<b>18:27</b>
	<b>Violin Concerto (1967)</b>	<b>20:59</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>I. Allegro moderato</b>	<b>9:21</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>II. Andante</b>	<b>4:25</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>III. Allegro</b>	<b>7:06</b>

**Janna Gandelman, Violin 3–5**  
**Kiev Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra**  
**Dmitry Yablonsky**

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