

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

GRAND
PIANO

EKMALIAN

PIANO WORKS

MIKAEL AYRAPETYAN

MAKAR EKMALIAN (1856–1905)

PIANO WORKS

MIKAEL AYRAPETYAN, *piano*

Catalogue Number: GP894

Recording Date: 15 May 2021

Recording Venue: Allegro Recordings, Los Angeles, USA

Producer: Mikael Ayrapetyan

Engineers: Matthew Snyder, Andrey Borisov

Piano: Steinway, Model D. 274

Piano Technician: Matthew Snyder

Booklet Notes: Mikael Ayrapetyan

Editions: Unpublished manuscripts

Artist Photograph: Gennady Kurbatov

Composer Photograph: Grant Dmitryuk

Cover Art: Julia Volk

1	NOCTURNE (pub .1892)	03:51
2	SONG WITHOUT WORDS (1888)	02:12
	TEN ARMENIAN FOLK SONGS (1889)	22:11
3	No. 1. Heriq Ordeakq ('That's Enough, Son')	02:11
4	No. 2. Chem krna khaha ('I Can't Play')	01:39
5	No. 3. Pzti tha ('Little Boy')	03:38
6	No. 4. Baher, duq kanancheceq ('Gardens, Become Green')	03:00
7	No. 5. Berdice dur ela, Alagyaz tesa ('Coming Out of the Fortress, I Saw Alagyaz')	01:40
8	No. 6. Hov areq, Sarer jan ('Cool Down, the Lovely Mountains')	02:53
9	No. 7. Chakharyaq ('Spinning Wheel') – No. 8. Zhohovrdakan ('Social Song')	02:33
10	No. 9. Araz e heshtacel a ('Araz has Become Light – Water')	02:10
11	No. 10. Tsamtel ('Thin Hair')	02:11
	THREE ARMENIAN FOLK ESQUISSES (1891)	07:32
12	No. 1	02:12
13	No. 2	03:42
14	No. 3	01:34
	PATARAG (DIVINE LITURGY) (1891–92)	
	(arr. M. Ayrapetyan) (selection)	39:59
15	No. 1. Horurd horin anhasanrskihbn ('O, Deep and Incomprehensible Mystery')	04:14
16	No. 19. Surb, Surb ('Saint, Saint')	04:27
17	No. 23a. Amen, Hayr erknavor ('Amen, Father in Heaven')	02:53
18	No. 23b. Hoki Astuco ('The Spirit of God')	03:38
19	No. 9. Marmin Terunakan ('Corpus Christi')	02:10
20	No. 27. Hayr mer ('Our Father')	03:58
21	No. 28. Ev end hogvo qu ('Together with Your Spirit')	01:07
22	No. 29–30a. Miayn surb ('Only Holiness')	03:28
23	No. 31a. Ter vohormya ('Good Heavens')	02:41
24	No. 30c. Amen Hayr Surb ('Amen, Saint Father')	04:42
25	No. 31c. Ter vohormya ('Good Heavens')	02:05
26	No. 32. Orhnyal e Astuac ('Blessed be God')	04:10

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TOTAL TIME: 75:50

MAKAR EKMALIAN (1856–1905)

PIANO WORKS

Makar Grigori Ekmalian was an Armenian composer, conductor, teacher, folklorist, and a student of Rimsky-Korsakov. He played a significant role in the development of Armenian musical art of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Makar Ekmalian was born in Vagharshapat, Russian Empire (now Etchmiadzin, Armenia) to Western Armenian parents. In 1872 he graduated from the Theological Seminary of the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate. In 1873–74, in St Etchmiadzin, he studied ancient Armenian notography under the prominent composer and musicologist Nikoghayos Tashchian. Together with his teacher, Ekmalian recorded and standardised liturgical hymn books using Armenian notography, and participated in the publication of collections of sacred music. Catholicos George IV blessed the editions of ancient spiritual hymns, liturgical hymns and the chronology of the Armenian church prepared by Tashchian and Ekmalian. From 1874 Ekmalian taught singing and Armenian music theory at the Gevorgian Theological Academy.

Ekmalian's primary education in local seminaries and colleges paved the way for his relocation to St Petersburg where he was enrolled at the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1879 and studied under Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, having received permission to study for free.

At the same time, he led the choir of the local Armenian Church of St Catherine, which facilitated his financial situation. This experience would go on to inform his studies and influence his work on the *Patarag* ('Divine Liturgy') of the Apostolic Church.

In 1887, during the student summer holidays, he went to St Etchmiadzin, where he presented excerpts from his *Three-Voice Liturgy* to Catholicos Makar I, and, having received the approval of the Synod, returned to St Petersburg. He graduated from the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1888, and his thesis – the cantata *The Wanderings of the Rose*, based on the fairy tale by German poet Moritz Horn – was performed under the composer's direction.

During his student years, Ekmalian created several prominent piano pieces: *Nocturne* and *Song Without Words*, the romance *My Tears* based on the words of Heine, *Shadows of High Mountains* and *By the rivers of Babylon*.

The creativity of Ekmalian played a fundamental role in the development of Armenian music: by significantly expanding its genre boundaries, the composer contributed to the formation of a new national musical language, and the introduction of the Armenian melos to European forms of polyphonic music.

In 1891, Ekmalian moved to Tiflis (now Tbilisi), and taught at the Nersisian Armenian seminary, where he created a first-class men's chorus.

Ekmalian's magnum opus is the monumental *Patarag* – a divine liturgy for a four-voice mixed choir a cappella. *Patarag* is the name of the musical accompaniment of Christian worship in the Armenian church. The basis of the *Patarag* (originally translated from Greek) is an edition of the Eastern Christian Liturgy with a number of original inserts. In ancient times, recitative and psalmody prevailed in *Patarag*. Over time, more chanting forms of choral and solo singing began to develop. In the 12th century, the expressive means of the *Patarag* were updated and raised to a new artistic level by Nerses Shnorali, Catholicos of Armenia from 1166 to 1173. In the 19th century, numerous *Patarags* were created for choir using traditional melodic material. Chiefly among them, the *Patarag* of Ekmalian, and the polyphonic-textured *Patarag* of his student Komitas, stand out. Ekmalian incorporates previously unheard polyphonic and homophonic vocal parts into the core structure of *Patarag* and notates it in its entirety. He completed the work in 1892. Ekmalian presented his creation for discussion to the St Petersburg Court Singing Chapel and the Conservatory, where the work was highly appreciated and recommended for performance and publication.

The Nersisian seminary school choir of Tiflis was the first to perform this novel version of the *Patarag*, which would influence the compositional approach to Armenian liturgical and folkloric music within the works of Komitas – himself a student of Ekmalian – and others. The work also received a performance in Vienna.

In 1893–94 Ekmalian became teacher and rector of the Tbilisi Music College. He was admired by composers including Balakirev, Verdi, Saint-Saëns and Komitas. Arrangements of peasant folk songs occupy a central place in Ekmalian's creative work alongside his other works including symphonic overtures, choruses, romances and piano pieces. He died on 6 March 1905 in Tiflis.

Mikael Ayrapetyan

MIKAEL AYRAPETYAN

Mikael Ayrapetyan is a pianist, composer, producer and teacher, as well as a researcher and public figure. He has done much to popularise Armenian classical music all over the world with his Secrets of Armenia musical project, which began during his studies at the Moscow Conservatory. Born in 1984 in Yerevan, Armenia, he studied at the Moscow Tchaikovsky State Conservatory, and continues to uphold the performing traditions of the Russian piano school, of which Konstantin Igumnov, Samuel Feinberg and Lev Oborin are luminaries. His repertoire ranges from the Baroque to the contemporary and includes rarely performed works by Armenian composers. This period was the start of his extensive concert activity in which he performs works by Tigranian, Chukhadjian, Komitas, Melikian, Spendiarian, Barkhudarian, Stepanian, Khachaturian, Babajanian, Arutyunian, Abrahamian, Bagdasarian, Avetisian, Mirzoyan, Amirkhanian and many other Armenian composers, which eventually led him to produce his own concerts. After completing his studies at the Moscow Conservatory, Ayrapetyan performed widely in many countries, receiving an enthusiastic response from critics and audiences alike. He was awarded the State Prize of the Republic of Armenia for his outstanding contribution to the development and popularisation of Armenian classical music.

His recording of Eduard Bagdasarian's piano and violin music (GP664) earned a five-star rating from *International Piano*, and his album of Haro Stepanian's *24 Preludes* (GP760) was praised as a 'discovery' by both *Classica* and *Piano News*.

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MAKAR EKMALIAN
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MAKAR EKMALIAN (1856–1905)

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Makar Grigori Ekmalian, a student of Rimsky-Korsakov, played a significant role in the development of Armenian music in the 19th and 20th centuries, expanding its genre boundaries and contributing to the formation of a new national musical language. The folk-song arrangements represent Ekmalian's skill in blending Armenian lyrical expressiveness with European stylistic colours. His magnum opus, the *Patarag* (Divine Liturgy) was canonised in 1895, and is still in use by the Armenian Church today. This album of world première recordings by the acclaimed Armenian pianist Mikael Ayrapetyan are performed from the composer's unpublished manuscripts.



MIKAEL AYRAPETYAN

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