



# COMPOSER SPOTLIGHT



## ARAM KHATCHATURIAN

1903–1978

Style: 20th Century



### Education

Aram Illyich Khachaturian was an Armenian composer and conductor. The son of a bookbinder, Khachaturian first considered a career in medicine or engineering. In 1921, he moved to Moscow to join his older brother who was a stage director at the Moscow Art Theatre. He entered the Gnessin Institute in 1922, studying both cello and biology. He then became a student at the Moscow Conservatory in 1929 to focus on music composition.

### Style and Influences

Khachaturian grew up in an atmosphere rich with folk music. His style often evokes the colorful flavor of Armenian folk music, characterized by unique harmonies, vibrant rhythms, and tuneful melodies.

He is quoted as saying "The vivid tunes of Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian songs and dances performed by folk bards and musicians ... has always remained the natural soil nourishing all my work."



### The Soviet Union

The Soviet era was a difficult time for many composers. State-controlled arts meant composers were often asked to write popular, feel-good music that was patriotic and celebrated the state and its heroes.



This did not sit well with many composers who felt limited by the censorship of their more abstract and symbolic works. Khachaturian was one of several composers, including Prokofiev and Shostakovich, who were denounced in 1948 for not adhering to the Soviet Union's artistic goals. He was censored and sent to Armenia as punishment for a time but was later exonerated.

### Significant Works:

- Sabre Dance (best-known work in pop culture)
- Toccata
- Piano Concerto
- Masquerade Suite
- Albums for Children