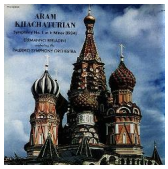
Khachaturian - Symphony No. 1 in E Minor (1978)



1 Andante maestoso passione - Allegro ma non troppo 18:24 2 Adagio sostenuto 11:00 3 Allegro risoluto 10:31 Palermo Symphony Orchestra Errmanno Berladini - conductor

Written as his graduation piece at the Moscow Conservatory, Khachaturian's brilliantly coloured and atmospheric First Symphony is an excellent demonstration of his orchestral mastery (further enhanced by revisions Khachaturian made in the 1960s following his first-hand experience of conducting the work around the world). Its Caucasian influence is evident in the work's melodic arabesques and in the quasi-improvisatory style of its woodwind writing (most notably for the clarinets); yet there is an intensity and audacity in its spicy dissonances, together with a rhythmic and contrapuntal sophistication which makes one appreciate why Prokofieff thought Khachaturian such a promising talent.

The first movement in particular is eventful and full of striking contrasts, presenting a rich tapestry of instrumental colours, some of them ravishing, others strange and eerie such as the combination of celesta with high string harmonics, yet others more forthright and exhilarating. The second movement opens a harp and flute motif which seems to anticipate (possibly inspired?) "Moonlight" from Britten's Sea Interludes, soon contrasted with a folk dance. The third movement contains music most readily recognizable as Khachaturian's in style, particularly the impassioned string writing which anticipates that to be heard in the Second Symphony.
---Daniel Jaffé, boosey.com

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