Otar Taktakishvili – Love Songs- Megrelian Songs (1977)

Love Songs *A.1 In The Mountains 3:28 A.2 A Tushinian Love Song 2:55 A.3 The Parting 3:08 A.4 Amorous Ditties 2:53 A.5 When We Are Seperated 4:14 A.6 The Quarrel 3:46 A.7 By The Stream 3:34 A.8 The Meeting 2:23* Megrelian Songs *B.1 The Rose 1:35 B.2 Varado, An Abkhazian Melody 3:44 B.3 Chaguna, Humorous Song Of A Loafer 2:05 B.4 Song Of A Toil 2:55 B.5 Cradle Song 3:46 B.6 Chichetura, Humorous Song 2:28 B.7 Song Of A Bullock Cart Driver 4:11 B.8 Song Of Lament 3:51 B.9 Consecration Of The House, A Wedding Song 3:12*
Leningrad Chamber Orchestra Rustavi Choir Vocals – Zurab Sotkilava (tracks: A.1 to A.6, A.8 to B.9), Medea Namoradze (tracks: A.1 to A.4, A.8), Hamlet Gonashvili (A7) Anzor Erkomaishvili - Art Director

The Georgian composer Otar Taktakishvili's life began in Tbilisi, Georgia on 27 July 1924. Born into a musical family and steeped in the ancient and rich culture of his homeland, he went on to become the dominant force in Georgian classical music of the 20th century.

In the early 1970s, Taktakishvili wrote three remarkable song-cycles. They were the Gurian songs, the Megrellian songs, and the Love songs. They were written for men’s vocal octet, chorus and orchestra. In the Megrellian songs a tenor soloist was added and in the Love songs a soprano and tenor soloist were deployed. Over the past fifteen years the composer had used the poetry of great Georgian nationalist poets and fused them with elements of Georgian folk singing with its distinctive harmony and polyphony. Now he intended to go further, by using traditional Georgian texts, actual Georgian folk melodies from various regions of the country, and traditional Georgian folk song styles, all fused with the classical music idiom. The result was magical.

Megrellian Songs opens with “The Rose”, an innocent striding melody featuring the tenor singing of the beauty of the flower. The following “Varudo, an Abkhazium Melody” is a dirge-like melody sung about a rock that forever stands in silence. It is quite poignant. The tenor is joined by the chorus at the end. Next up is “Chaguna, Humorous Song of a Loafer”. This song is a tongue-twister with an accelerating tempo mocking a lazy fellow. It is mostly played pizzicato with the chorus joining in as background or emphasis. The cycle continues with “Song of Toil”, an a cappella lament alternating between tenor and chorus as the protagonist bewails his endless physical toil. “Cradle Song” follows with a tender melody sung by the tenor to a child. It is full of sweetness and touching devotion and is not at all sad. The next piece is “Chihatura, Humorous Song”. It tells the story of a jackal that takes bad children away. Any sinister elements are banished by the last lines which relate how brave dogs will defend the house from the jackal even if he comes. The music is light and the tenor’s recitation is punctuated by comic shrieks of alarm from the chorus. “Song of a Bullock-Cart Driver” follows. It speaks with dignity and pride of the hard life of the peasant. The chorus opens with a somber, tired lament. The tenor begins a melody redolent of exhaustion coupled with the simple dignity of hard work. The chorus joins in to amplify the lament. The next piece is “Song of Lament”. It deals with the disappearance of a child. The music is tragic and somber with the tolling of bells and unrelenting grief from chorus and soloist. As with the prior song-cycle, Taktakishvili ends Megrellian songs with an up-beat piece, “Consecration of the House, A Wedding Song”. This speaks of the blessing of a new house occupied by newlyweds, glorifying home, family and a happy life. The tenor starts with a clarion call of joy, accentuated by the chorus. Then a lively melody begins full of high spirits as the young couple are ushered into their new home by the chorus. The sequence is repeated as the cycle ends on a note of joy.

Love Songs opens with “In the Mountains”. The soprano, then tenor sing a beautiful lyrical melody led by the flute and violins with the choir joining in. The sequence repeats as the happy peasants sing of their love for their mountain home. “A Tushinian Love Song” follows. A drone melody begins with the tenor launching a passionate love-song. A delightful flute melody breaks in and the soprano vocalises on the flute melody. The material repeats as the tenor makes his case a second time and the soprano answers it again. The next song is “The Parting”. A sad lament begins with the tenor. The soprano answers then the chorus intones a sad refrain. Finally all three sing together. “Amorous Ditties” is the title of the next piece. It begins with a jaunty theme with pizzicato and winds. The soprano and tenor then trade amorous ditties, commented on by the chorus. A delightful piece of charming, innocent love. The mood changes

with “When We Are Separated”. The chorus sets the solemn underpinning for the tenor to lament over. The chorus both sings under the tenor and comments on the sad state of affairs. “The Quarrel” follows as the lower voices insistently chant a phrase, then are joined by the higher voices. The tenor joins in and sings a passionate melody. He then joins the chorus in their chant as all three groups sing together. The lyrical “By the Stream” follows. A choral soloist starts a cappella then is joined by the rest of the chorus in a quintessential Georgian display of magical harmonies. The cycle concludes with “The Meeting”. A bright stuttering melody on the strings starts us off then the soloists exuberantly join in. The chorus enters to comment on the joy of this obviously pleasant meeting. Then all three sing together bringing the cycle to a happy conclusion. The Melodiya recording features the composer as conductor and the Ensemble Rustavi as the chorus.---Andrew Hartman, musicweb-international.com

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