

PHCD 156

Ambartsumian/Sheludyakov

Stravinsky/Bartok

PHCD 156

STRAVINSKY

**Levon Ambartsumian, violin
Anatoly Sheludyakov, piano**

SUITE ITALIENNE

- 1. Introduction 2'20"
- 2. Serenade 2'58"
- 3. Tarantella 2'12"
- 4. Gavotte 4'10"
- 5. Minuet 1'39"
- 6. Finale 2'11"

DUO CONCERTANT

- 7. Cantilena 4'01"
- 8. Eglogue I 2'19"
- 9. Eglogue II 3'29"
- 10. Gigue 3'53"
- 11. Dithyramb 2'56"

DIVERTIMENTO

- 12. Ouverture 6'11"
- 13. Danses suisses 4'12"
- 14. Scherzo 2'52"
- 15. Pas de deux 6'37"

a) Adagio b) Variation c) Coda

BARTOK

FIRST RHAPSODY (Folk Dances) (1928)

- 16. Prima parte (lassu) 4'38"
- 17. Seconda parte (friss) 5'33"

SECOND RHAPSODY (Folk Dances)

revised version (1945)

- 18. I (lassu) 4'20"
- 19. II (friss) 6'55"

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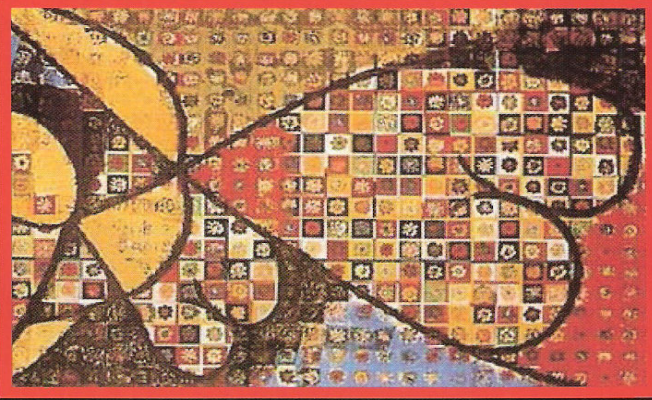
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Stravinsky/Bartok

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STRAVINSKY

*Suite Italienne
Duo Concertant
Divertimento*

BARTOK

*First Rhapsody (1928)
Second Rhapsody (1945)*

**Levon Ambartsumian, violin
Anatoly Sheludyakov, piano**

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882 – 1971)

The son of a leading bass at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov (1902-8), who was an influence on his early music, as were Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Glazunov and (from 1907-8) Debussy and Dukas. This colourful mixture of sources lies behind such pieces as *Fireworks*, *The Fire and the Shepherdess*, and the major ballet *Firebird*. It was not a simple matter of combining, however. A new musical element entered the mix—clean orchestral textures, "bright" instrumentation, and an emphasis on stamping, irregular rhythms—heard especially in the *Firebird*'s "Internal Dance of the King Katschei."

Firebird's success led to two more ballets for Diaghilev's Ballets russes: *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre du Printemps*, both landmarks of twentieth-century music. The Russian element becomes less Romantic and more "objectified." By *Le Sacre*, the "infernal" element of *Firebird* had erupted into a previously-unheard, epic "barbarism," so much so that some of the audience rioted at the Paris premiere. The score became an icon of musical modernism and influenced many other modern giants.

The end of World War I moved Stravinsky in a new direction with *L'Histoire du Soldat*, *Tango*, and *Ragtime*. In all these scores, he introduces a pared-down aesthetic and what at first seems like an element of parody but which turns out to be an element of "objectification," like a Cubist collage with everyday objects. At the same time, he becomes interested in classical procedures and updates them for an expanded harmonic language. Masterpieces include the *Overt*, the "ballet with song" *Pulcinella*, and *Oedipus Rex*, which takes off from the Hamelian oratorio.

Between the two wars, he was probably the most influential modern composer, especially in the United States and France. His masterpieces include the *Concerto for two solo pianofortes*, the piano and the violin concerti, the ballets *Apollo* and *Leu de Carre*, *Concerto in D* for strings, *Dances Concertantes*, *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto*, *Symphony of Psalms*, *Symphony in Three Movements*, *Symphony in C*, *Ebony Concerto*, *Mass*, climaxing in the full-length opera *The Rake's Progress* (libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman), a twentieth-century classic.

After *The Rake's Progress*, Stravinsky felt he had reached a creative impasse with the neoclassic style. He turned to serialism and became strongly influenced by the manner of Anton Webern, although he never lost his personal musical imprint. Major works include *Movements for piano and orchestra*, *The Dove Descending Breaks the Air* for chorus, *Cantata*, *In Memoriam Dylan Thomas*, *Three Shakespeare Songs*, *Threni*, *Introit*, and *Requiem Canticles*.

Most of the violin music by Igor Stravinsky was created during the early 1930s. The impetus for writing these works was Stravinsky's meeting with the violinist Samuel Dushkin with whom the composer, as pianist, toured Europe and Latin America from 1931-1937. The *Duo Concertant* was composed in 1932 and shortly thereafter performed in Berlin by Dushkin and Stravinsky. The work, as its title suggests, adheres to the principle of balance between two equally important solo instruments. The underlying program suggests the quality of ancient Roman poetry and more specifically to quote Stravinsky, "a musical parallel of pastoral poetry".

Suite Italienne of 1933 and the *Divertimento* of 1934 were both performed by Dushkin and Stravinsky shortly after their composition. They are based on music from Stravinsky's ballets *Pulcinella* and *Le Boiser de la Fec*. Having retained the main

principle of Duo Concertant; that of a concerto character with parity for both solo instruments, Stravinsky further introduced into these works, the character of thematic derivation. In the case of the *Suite Italienne* thematic material of Pergolesi and in the *Divertimento*, that of Tchaikovsky.

BELA BARTOK (1881 – 1945)

He began lessons with his mother, who brought up the family after his father's death in 1888. In 1894 they settled in Bratislava, where he attended the Gymnasium. In 1904 he made his first Hungarian folksong transcription and in 1907 he was appointed to the Budapest Academy, which enabled him to settle in Hungary and continue his folksong collecting, notably in Transylvania. Meanwhile his music was beginning to be influenced by this activity and by the music of Debussy that Zoltan Kodály had brought back from Paris; both opened the way to new, modal kinds of harmony and irregular meter.

The 1908 *Violin Concerto* is still within the symphonic tradition, but the many small piano pieces of this period show a new, authentically Hungarian Bartók emerging, with the 4ths of Magyar folksong, the rhythms of peasant dance and the scales he had discovered among Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak peoples. The arrival of this new voice is documented in his *String Quartet No.1* (1908), introduced at a Budapest concert of his music in 1910. There followed orchestral pieces and a one-act opera, *Bluebeard's Castle*, influenced by Mussorgsky and Debussy but most directly by Hungarian peasant music. In 1917 while composing *The Miraculous Mandarin* Bartók came under the influence of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, and produced some of his most complex music in the two violin sonatas of 1921-2.

Bartók was now well established and continued to make himself further known throughout the world with the creation of Two Piano Concertos, 4 additional String Quartets as well as *Music for Strings*, *Percussion and Celesta* (1936) and the *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* (1937), both written for performance in Switzerland at a time when the political situation in Hungary was growing unsympathetic.

In 1940 Bartók and his second wife (he had divorced and remarried in 1923) sadly left war-torn Europe to live in New York, which he found alien. They gave concerts and for a while he had a research grant to work on a collection of Yugoslav folksong, but their finances were precarious, as increasingly was his health. It seemed that his last European work the *String Quartet No.6* (1939), might be his pessimistic swansong, but then came the exuberant *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943) and the *Sonata for solo violin* (1944). The *Piano Concerto No.3*, written to provide his widow with an income, was almost finished when he died, as was a *Viola Concerto* left in sketch form.

Both of Bartók's Rhapsodies were written in 1928. The *First Rhapsody* is dedicated to Joseph Szigeti, the Hungarian virtuoso violinist and the *Second Rhapsody* to Zoltan Szekely, another old friend of Bartók's. Both compositions are written in typical two part lastu-friss (slow-fast) form of the czardas. The *First Rhapsody* exists in many versions: for violin and piano, for violin and orchestra, for cello and piano and also with two different endings. The *Second Rhapsody* was revised in 1944 and also exists in two versions: for piano and orchestra, as well as in its original edition and a later condensed and revised version.



Sheludyakov Ambartsumian

Levon Ambartsumian, was born in Moscow in 1955, and began studying violin at the age of three. He attended the Moscow Central Music School and then graduated from the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory with a special artist diploma. His teachers there were Felix Andrievski, Yuri Yankelevich, Leonid Kogan, and Igor Bezrodny. In 1977 he was the first prizewinner of the Zagreb International Violin Competition headed by Henryk Szeryng. Two years later he garnered a prize at the Montreal International Competition, and in 1981 he won the All-Union Violin Competition in Riga. Mr. Ambartsumian was distinguished as an honored artist of Armenia in 1988 and an honored artist of Russia in 1997. Mr. Ambartsumian has performed regularly in all the major cities of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He has appeared as a soloist and recorded for radio and television with the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Bolshoy Theater Orchestra, Kirov Opera, and the Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia, and Peking philharmonic orchestras, among many others. He has collaborated with conductors and composers such as Valery Gergiev, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Maxim Shostakovich, Aram Khaachaturian, Tikhon Khrennikov, and Alfred Schnittke. Since 1988 he has performed in the United States, Canada, Italy, France, Germany, Greece, Spain, Brazil, and South Korea. Mr. Ambartsumian joined the faculty of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory in 1978. For two years he was a visiting professor at Indiana University School of Music, and in 1995 he accepted the position of the Franklin Professor of Violin at the University Of Georgia School Of Music in Athens. Mr. Ambartsumian devotes his time to contemporary Russian and American music and has made several world premieres. He has released several CDs, including music by Wieniawski, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Vivaldi, Shostakovich, Schnittke, Arutunian, Vasks, and Bromner. As a teacher, he has given master classes in Russia, Armenia, South Korea, Canada, Brazil, and France.

Anatoly Sheludyakov was born in Moscow in 1955 where he graduated from the Russian Academy of Music and completed his postgraduate studies there under Professor Anatoly Vedernikov. He also graduated from the Moscow Conservatory in the composition class of Tikhon Khrennikov. In 1977, Mr. Sheludyakov was the winner of the Russian National Piano Competition. He has performed solo concerts with orchestras, solo recitals, and chamber music performances in the most prestigious concert halls in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other major cities in Russia, the United States, Germany, France, Italy, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, China and Australia. He has recorded seven CDs and has performed on Russian radio and television. Mr. Sheludyakov was distinguished as honored artist of Russia in 1999. His repertoire includes the major works for piano, piano and orchestra, and piano chamber music of the baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary periods. He has been an assistant professor of piano at the Russia Academy of Music and maintains a private piano studio. Mr. Sheludyakov is an artist-in-residence at the University of Georgia.