

KARA KARAYEV

Ballet Suites

Seven Beauties

In The Path of Thunder

Moscow Radio and

TV Symphony Orchestra

Rauf Abdullayev, conductor



**Kara Karayev:
Ballet Suites from Seven Beauties (1952)
and In The Path of Thunder (1957)**



Kara Karayev
(1918-1982)

Kara Karayev was a leading figure in Azerbaijani music after World War II. Born in Baku in 1918, he studied piano under Sharoyev at the Baku Music Technical School (1930-35) eventually entering the Azerbaijan State Conservatory where his teachers were Rudol'f and Hajibeyov. He studied Azerbaijani folk art, transcribed ashug songs and dances and began composing. In 1938 he entered the Moscow Conservatory to study composition with Anatoly Alexandrov (composition) and Sergei Vasilenko (instrumentation). From 1942 to 1946 he studied composition with Dmitri Shostakovich. His opera *Veten* (1945) and the symphonic poem *Leyli i Mejnun* (1947) won him instant success and state prizes. A versatile composer able to assimilate

seemingly incompatible traditions, often creating a synthesis of Prokofievian chromaticism with Azerbaijani folk modality, Kara Karayev wrote two operas, two ballets, three symphonies, a violin concerto, two string quartets, incidental music for the theater and twenty film scores, choral, vocal and piano music as well as music for band and folk orchestra. A much honored composer, Karayev was National Artist of the USSR (1959), a member of the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences, professor at the Azerbaijani State Conservatory and a board member of the Azerbaijani Composers' Union. Kara Karayev died in Moscow in 1982.

The two compositions on this disc date from the 1950s when Karayev was influenced by the writings of poet Nizami. According to musicologist Yuriy Gabay, "The picturesque clarity of Karayev's thought and his profound feeling for music drama are most clearly displayed in the ballet *Seven Beauties*. The work's dramatic principles approach those of Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev, a congruence particularly striking in the truly symphonic development. All the thematic material is organized in a patently structural manner and the ballet combines through-composition with number form: the fantastic, lyrical and psychological images are fused and intermingled with folk dance scenes in an impetuous and colorful movement. Furthermore, the free use of rhythmic formulae from national dances and the melodic and harmonic support given by folk modality reveal the composer's integral aesthetic involvement with folklore." The ballet *Seven Beauties* was completed in 1952 and premiered that year at the Baku Opera and Ballet Theater. The plot of *Seven Beauties*

deals with the conflict between the oppressed people, symbolized by the lovely Aisha, and the corrupt rulers, the Shah Bakhram and his Vizier. A Prelude sets the scene for Act One, a half-ruined castle where, in seven niches, are seen portraits of the Seven Beauties. In the light of dawn the portraits seem to come to life. Like shadows they dance around Bakhram, who is disguised as a hunter. The Seven Beauties disappear, leaving him bewitched and unconscious. Aisha and her brother, Menzer, appear. To a Tempo Marciale, Menzer and Bakhram dance, contesting their strength and agility. Bakhram triumphs but gives to Menzer a golden belt and displays fondness for Aisha. The Vizier comes with his guard and villagers looking for Bakhram. They fall at Bakhram's feet, revealing to Aisha and Menzer that the young hunter is the Shah. The Vizier sounds the alarm that the Khazars have invaded the country. In the "Warriors' Dance" Bakhram conveys to the Vizier the symbols of power making him the administrator while Bakhram shall lead his troops to save the country. All depart and Aisha dances alone. Act Two begins with a cheerful scene at the market-place. The Seven Artisans demonstrate their trades and their skill, but the merriment is interrupted by the servants of the Vizier who rob the market and disappear with their loot behind the doors of the Shah's castle. In another scene of Act Two, also the market-place, Bakhram returns to confront the faithless Vizier. Menzer, also returning with the warriors, accuses the Vizier of trying to assassinate Bakhram. The cunning Vizier evades the charge by killing in front of Bakhram the very assassin whom he had sent. The Vizier then succeeds in throwing the suspicion of plotting upon Menzer and his friends, who are arrested by guards and taken to the castle. Act Three is the scene of a festival in honor of the Shah Bakhram, but there is, as ever, the undercurrent of intrigue and sinister doings. Aisha implores Bakhram for the release of her brother, Menzer, and his friends. They are led forth, but the defiant Menzer discloses to Bakhram the trickery and the injustice to the people. Bakhram is furious with Menzer. He will not be appeased either by the entreaties of Aisha or by Menzer's further revelations of the Vizier's treachery. When Bakhram orders that the friends of Menzer be executed, Menzer throws to the feet of Bakhram the golden belt and escapes through the crowd. Bakhram orders the Vizier to catch the fugitive dead or alive. The first scene of Act Four is a village. Servants of the Vizier come looking for Menzer, but the people refuse to give him up. In reprisal the Servants trample the harvest. The women try with dances to revive the trampled grain. From afar are heard the trumpets of Bakhram to whom the people had turned for justice and truth. The Vizier appears. The Vizier's Servants set fire to the village and the Vizier is murdered by one of the village men. The second scene of Act Four is again the half-ruined castle. Bakhram comes seeking the Seven Beauties, but before his eyes their loveliness becomes unreal and fantastic like a dream, until they disappear. Thunder and lightning destroy the castle. The Seven Artisans, in a dance about the difficult life of the people, try to open the eyes of Bakhram.

He is unsympathetic, and as his anger mounts they tell him to go away from the people, to leave the country. Aisha brings to Bakhrum a walking staff and a cloak, telling him to leave the country which he has destroyed and the people he has betrayed. The furious Bakhrum stabs Aisha with a knife. As she dies in her brother's arms, the people drive Bakhrum away. He disappears in the darkness of the night.

Karayev's second ballet *In The Path of Thunder* was written in 1957 and won the 1967 Lenin Prize. According to Yuriy Gabay, "The composer's social engagement, already strongly evident in *Seven Beauties*, becomes still more important: the deaths of the black man and the white woman, guilty only of love for each other (the plot is based on a novel by the South African writer Abrahams), constitute not only a personal but also a social tragedy. In the score Karayev uses black South African folk music, but altered according to his own creative ideas; he continued to 'symphonize' the ballet form, proving, in his own words, that 'the contemporary music of black people and people of color contains the principles of symphonic development in the same way that the music of other nations contains them.' The grandiose basso ostinato on the folk march "In the Path of Thunder" forms a true apotheosis to the ballet."

Russian musicologist, E. Mnatsakanova provides the following notes on the ballet suite: "The suite reproduces, in miniature, the plot of the ballet. The suite opens with a big general dance of the townspeople of Stilleveld, given in honor of the return of Lanny. The music of the General Dance is, to a great extent, full of African folk music. Listening to it, we are convinced that it is not only a dance number - it is also an extensive dramatic scene representing folk art and life. In the Dance of the Girls with Guitars, we are in the village of Stilleveld greeting fellow villager Lanny. Although African based rhythms abound, many listeners will also hear Spanish influences in this number. The next three sections are fully dedicated to Lanny and Sarie (the lovers and heroes of this ballet) - a poetical nocturne, their duet and a lovely lullaby. The epilogue of the ballet, the stern march "In the Path of Thunder," incarnates musically the images of the people's vengeance and struggle.

"We are reminded that Lanny's and Sarie's love was a daring challenge to the forces of evil, and their tragic death in the name of love is a call to struggle for human rights."

Notes edited by

Marina A. Ledin and Victor Ledin - © 1993.

Rauf Abdullayev

Conductor

The People's Conductor Rauf Abdullayev is an illustrious representative of the modern musical culture of Azerbaijan. Since 1984, Professor Abdullayev has served as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra. He is the founder of classical music festivals such as the "Music of the 20th Century" festival named after Kara Karayev. He was also Chief Conductor of the Ankara Ballet and Opera Theater from 1993 to 1997. Since that time, he has continued to appear frequently as Principal Guest Conductor with both the Ankara and Baku Opera Theater companies.

Rauf Abdullayev was born in Baku in 1938. Graduating with honors in piano performance from the famed Baku Academy of Music, he continued his studies in St. Petersburg as an honors graduate in Opera and Symphonic Conducting. He served as Principal Conductor of the Baku Opera until 1984, at which time he took over the directorship of the Azerbaijan State Symphony.

Many operas, ballets and symphonies by Azerbaijani composers were given their first performances under Professor Abdullayev's baton. He became known throughout Europe and the Near East for his impeccable artistic taste and subtle interpretations. He has been awarded many state and other honorary awards and titles during his active and tireless career.

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KARA KARAYEV (1918-1952)
Ballet Suites

SEVEN BEAUTIES

Suite from the ballet (1952)

1. Waltz	4:31
2. Adagio	5:42
3. Dance of Merriment	1:47
4. Prelude	4:12
5. Indian Dance	0:53
6. Khorezm Dance	0:50
7. Slavonic Dance	2:39
8. Magrib Dance	3:03
9. Chinese Dance	1:25
10. The most beautiful of all beauties	4:54
11. Procession	4:17

IN THE PATH OF THUNDER

Suite from the ballet (1958)

12. General Dance	4:08
13. Dance of the Girls with Guitars	6:15
14. Night in Stillefeld	5:21
15. Scene and Duet	10:01
16. Lullaby	5:48
17. In the Path of Thunder	6:35

Total Time: 72:34

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