



David Toradze

Piano Concerto

Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI

Gianandrea Nosedà Conductor

Alexander Toradze Piano



A memory from Gianandrea Noseda

Alexander “Lexo” Toradze and I shared the stage many times. It was one of the great artistic partnerships for me and included multiple Prokofiev’s piano concerti cycles, both Shostakovich’s Piano concerti, Stravinsky, Ravel G-major, Rachmaninoff nr. 3, and Tchaikovsky nr. 1. But what makes me proudest is that we were able to perform his father David Toradze’s Piano concerto in Turin in January 2005. I knew the piece because I prepared the work for Valery Gergiev a few years earlier in St. Petersburg. The performance in Turin was incredibly touching because I had the impression that Lexo was finally able to reconcile with his father who had passed away a few weeks after he defected from the Soviet Union in 1983. Lexo’s relationship with the memory of his father was difficult and he seemed to be carrying the moral responsibility for his death. Lexo and I had also planned to present the Georgian premiere of David Toradze’s Piano concerto in summer 2020 as part of the Tsinandali Festival but the pandemic forced the cancellation of the festival. This recording represents therefore Lexo’s spiritual heritage. It is not only a tribute to his intimately tormented relationship with his father, but also to the entire Toradze’s family, his mother Liana and his sister Nino. I am honoured to have been a part of it, and it is a memory of my friendship with this incredible artist.

The artistic partnership between Gianandrea Noseda and Alexander Toradze begun in December 1996 when “Lexo” made his first appearance in Milan performing two Prokofiev’s Piano concerti with the newly formed Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano “Giuseppe Verdi” conducted by Gianandrea Noseda: love at first sight, which endured until October 2016, when they performed together Ravel’s Piano concerto in G-major with the Philadelphia Orchestra. For twenty years Gianandrea and Lexo performed together in numerous concerts, including two Prokofiev’s Piano concerti Cycles (with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi and with the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI) and multiple appearances with the BBC Philharmonic, the Swedish Radio Orchestra, the Orchestre National de France, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Stresa Festival Orchestra, the Filarmonica Teatro Regio Torino.

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1. 20’21”

2. 11’40”

Live from the Auditorium del Lingotto, Torino 27.01.2005

Courtesy of RAI

3. “**Alexander Toradze Remembers His Father**” 7’34”

4. “**Alexander Toradze on Interpreting Prokofiev’s Seventh Piano Sonata**” 7’39”

5. “**Alexander Toradze on Interpreting the Piano Sonata op. 109 by L.V. Beethoven**” 5’56”

Total Time 53’10”

Excerpts from the documentary *An Hour with Alexander Toradze and Joseph Horowitz*
produced, filmed and edited by Behrouz Jamali

For the two photos with Gianandrea Noseda → © Foto Michele Rutigliano

For all other images → © The Toradze Foundation

David “Guguli” Toradze

by Nia Bakhtadze

David Toradze is one of the foremost figures in the Georgian compositional tradition. Known for his distinctive individuality and a creative style that is both original and multifaceted, his artistic contributions have left an indelible mark on Georgian music history. Over the span of four decades in the latter half of the 20th century, he enriched Georgian musical culture with a body of work that has had a lasting impact on the evolution of Georgian chamber, opera, and symphonic music. His compositions reflect his exceptional personality marked by wisdom, warmth, refined taste, a zest for life, and a deep connection to the true spirit of Georgia. David Toradze’s work represents a brilliant fusion of national traditions with the latest achievements in contemporary musical thought.

From the very beginning of his career, David Toradze captivated the public as a gifted and outstanding artist. His first symphony, inspired by the First World War, brought him early success and established him as a promising new voice in Georgian music. Dimitri Arakishvili, one of the pioneers of Georgian professional music, praised this symphony as a striking debut, calling him a remarkably talented and technically accomplished composer with a thoroughly European approach. Arakishvili foresaw great things for him, noting that despite Toradze’s rural origins in the village of Khvanchkara in Racha, his distinctly European style set him apart from his peers. This prediction would soon prove accurate.

During his student years, David Toradze also began to establish himself as a performer. He became known for his piano skills and his talent for

improvisation frequently performing on concert stages. In 1943, the newly established State Jazz Orchestra of Georgia, under the direction of Revaz Gabichvadze, appointed the young composer as its musical director and pianist. With its diverse repertoire, the orchestra played a key role in shaping Georgian popular music, and David Toradze was one of the first to introduce pop music to Georgia.

David Toradze was born in Tbilisi on April 14, 1922, into a family with a rich literary and academic background: his father, Professor Alexander Toradze, was a renowned scholar. David’s childhood was closely tied to the stunning landscapes of Georgia, particularly the village of Khvanchkara in Racha, a place where the Toradze family spent their summers. It was here that David was introduced to the local customs and first encountered the unique Georgian polyphony and folk melodies, which would go on to serve as a primary source of inspiration for his compositions. His parents, passionate about music themselves, recognized and nurtured his musical talent from an early age, setting the foundation for his exceptional career.

At the Tbilisi State Conservatory, David Toradze began his studies in 1937, learning composition under Sargis Barkhudaryan and piano in the class of Anastasia Virsaladze. Anastasia Virsaladze early noted the talent of her pianist student; however, David Toradze’s leaning towards composition was also apparent, prompting him to further those studies at the Moscow Conservatory with Professor Reinhold Glière.

During his 40-year creative career, David Toradze explored nearly every genre of musical art, including songs, romances, symphonic works, chamber music, instrumental pieces, vocal-symphonic compositions, oratorios, music for dramatic theater, opera, operetta, and film music.

However, ballet music is central to David Toradze's body of work, offering the clearest examples of his characteristic style, mastery, and significant creative potential. *Gorda*, his debut ballet, a central piece in the composer's artistic legacy, stands as a brilliant classical example of Georgian ballet music. The premiere of *Gorda* was held on December 30, 1949, at the Tbilisi State Opera and Ballet Theatre and achieved great success. Legendary Georgian ballet dancer Vakhtang Chabukiani both starred in and choreographed the ballet, his unparalleled artistry giving the spectacle a special brilliance. The debut of the new Georgian ballet was met with fervent enthusiasm and excitement by the audience, and it soon secured a unique position within national ballet art. For many years, it was and remains the most beloved ballet in the repertoire of the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre. *Gorda* was also a triumph internationally, with performances in Szeged (Hungary) and Paris. At the 1966 International Ballet Competition in Varna, the Georgian ballet troupe and Vakhtang Chabukiani received a special prize, and *Gorda* was met with numerous enthusiastic reviews in the foreign press.

The next significant ballet *Mtsiri*, premiered on December 4, 1977, was a groundbreaking work in Georgian ballet art. This ballet was adapted into a film-ballet that won the Grand Prix at the 1978 VI International Film Festival in New York and also earned a prize at the Chicago International Film Festival.

David Toradze also achieved great recognition for his opera *The Northern Bride* (1958), his Symphony no. 2 "The Praise to Nikortsminda" (1968), and his nine vocal cycles based on Galaktion Tabidze's poems, *Georgian Folk Songs* (1974). The second symphony, "The Praise to Nikortsminda," finds its inspiration in Galaktion Tabidze's poem of the same title,

as well as the impressive Georgian architectural example of the Nikortsminda church. "With this symphony, I wanted somehow to pay homage to its creators", David Toradze wrote about his work. The programmatic symphony "The Praise to Nikortsminda" stands as a monumental work. With its ideological content, original conception, broad musical scope, and brilliant orchestral mastery, the second symphony holds significant importance in both the composer's work and the history of Georgian symphony music.

Another significant area that particularly characterizes David Toradze's work is his brilliant vocal and film music. He is author of popular Georgian film music, such as: *Bothersome Neighbours*, *Paliastomi*, *Encounter with the Past*, *Last Day*, *Day First*, and *Is That a Man?!*.

The inexhaustible source of the composer's inspiration and wisdom lies within the treasury of folk creativity, and thus the Georgian folk music nourishes his work. David Toradze's works are distinguished by their contemporary relevance, melodic richness, original orchestration, and brilliant instrumental mastery. He introduced a completely new harmonic and orchestral language into Georgian film music. He created his own unique world.

David Toradze's pedagogical and public work is invaluable. He held the position of Professor of Composition at the Tbilisi State Conservatory from 1953 until the end of his life. For three decades, he nurtured multiple generations of talented young composers. From 1962 to 1968, David Toradze, along with composer Alexi Machavariani, led the Union of Georgian Composers. Thanks to his multifaceted contributions, he was always at the vanguard of Georgian music.



The Piano Concerto

by Nia Bakhtadze

David Toradze's multifaceted work culminates in his Piano Concerto, a piece he dedicated to his son Alexander "Lexo" Toradze, who was the first performer and a brilliant interpreter of this concerto. David Toradze worked on his last creation for 9 years. It seems that working on this piece proved to be a highly responsible endeavor for the composer, knowing he was creating it for his son. Listening to the recording of the concerto, one profoundly senses the powerful genetic bond between the two great artists, father and son Toradze. In this way, Lexo emerges as a co-creator of the work.

David Toradze's Piano Concerto stands as one of the 20th century's most brilliant examples of the concert genre, lauded for its artistic merit. It is a deeply philosophical, tragic work infused with a religious dimension. This concerto embodies the dignified life path of an artistic father, as perceived and expressed by his brilliant pianist son. This Piano Concerto introduces a fundamentally new expression, distinguishing itself not only within David Toradze's compositions but also within the broader scope of Georgian professional music. This virtuoso score clearly demonstrates the evolution of the composer's musical language.

David Toradze's original conception shaped the concerto's musical dramaturgy and compositional structure: the work masterfully employs modern techniques, innovative intonations, and unique timbral discoveries within its orchestral palette. A special rhythmic and emotional dynamic is

created in the work's dramaturgy by the unusual combination of percussion groups and the pianist's virtuoso score.

In his handwritten score, the composer envisioned a striking setup: two percussion groups (one from a symphony orchestra and one from a jazz orchestra), an electric organ, and two guitars. In David Toradze's unique score, his profound connection to national musical origins is particularly noteworthy, especially as reflected in its rhythmic structure. The composer masterfully blends the rhythmic intonations of mountain folklore and the martial dance "Khorumi" with jazz elements, thus innovatively modifying traditional folklore in this work. The Piano Concerto is an autobiographical work, notable for its profound expressiveness, original formal structure, and contrasting virtuoso episodes. These elements collectively convey the artist's rich spiritual world. It stands as a brilliant example of the synthesis of tradition and innovation.

First performed to great success in 1983 in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, this concerto by David Toradze was a notable event, further distinguished by the composer's presence at the premiere.

In 2001, Lexo Toradze performed David Toradze's Piano Concerto with the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Valery Gergiev, at the International Music Festival "White Nights."

Lexo's Journey

by Joseph Horowitz

I have never met anyone more gifted at thinking while speaking than Alexander Toradze. It was doubtless in his native Tbilisi, where toasting is a competitive creative act, that Lexo acquired his understanding of conversation as an art. A Toradze story required an introduction, a climax, and a coda, suitably interspersed with digressive footnotes and annotations. At the piano, his mettlesome intellect engaged in fraught interaction with a volcano of feeling.

As a Toradze tale could not possibly be abridged or excerpted, a Toradze "interview" was invariably a false experience. For years I attempted to sit him down to speak, unimpeded, in front of a camera. Finally, during a Shostakovich festival in Washington, D.C., with my PostClassical Ensemble, I shoved him into a cramped office in which Behrouz Jamali awaited with his equipment. My goal was to have Lexo tell only two stories – one about his father, one about Ella Fitzgerald – and then to describe the manner in which he interpreted Prokofiev's Seventh Piano Sonata (which he was performing that week). Behrouz phoned the next day to inform me that there was no possibility of editing this footage into a film. This did not surprise me; the tempo of Lexo's discourse, its ebb and flow, accelerations and diminuendos, was inviolable. I told Behrouz to take a deep breath. He phoned the next day and announced that he now discovered that the film was already there. And so it was. Behrouz proceeded to elegantly undertake some snipping, then to add some supplementary footage, and it was done. You can see it, all 59 minutes, on youtube. And you can hear two excerpts on the present SACD.



The first excerpt is a story about Lexo's father. The second is an exegesis on Interpretation. Initially, Lexo focuses on the first movement of the Prokofiev sonata, in which he heard the sobs of wartime mothers. Lexo always required a story – even for Beethoven's Op. 109 Piano Sonata, his eventual topic here, in which he glimpses Beethoven's vicissitudes in love. As he once told me:

"I can't just look at a score and think: Gosh, what a beautiful concerto; I'm going to make it just delicious. That doesn't interest me. Composers, if they are expressing something, they do it because they cannot express it in other ways, because there is something they need to get out of their system. You don't need to get out of your system pure happiness and joy. No, because it's comfortable. So you need an element of discomfort, of irritation, certain spiritual urges that make you create this or that. That's where our real differences are – in pain. Tolstoy, at the beginning of *Anna Karenina*, says, 'All happy families resemble one another; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.' So I have to find this element. I have to find two or three pages of pain. Then I use that, because I can associate with that, and elaborate. I can use my own experience. And fortunately, my own experience with pain is quite considerable. It has been enough."
[Quoted from The Ivory Trade (1990), p. 100]

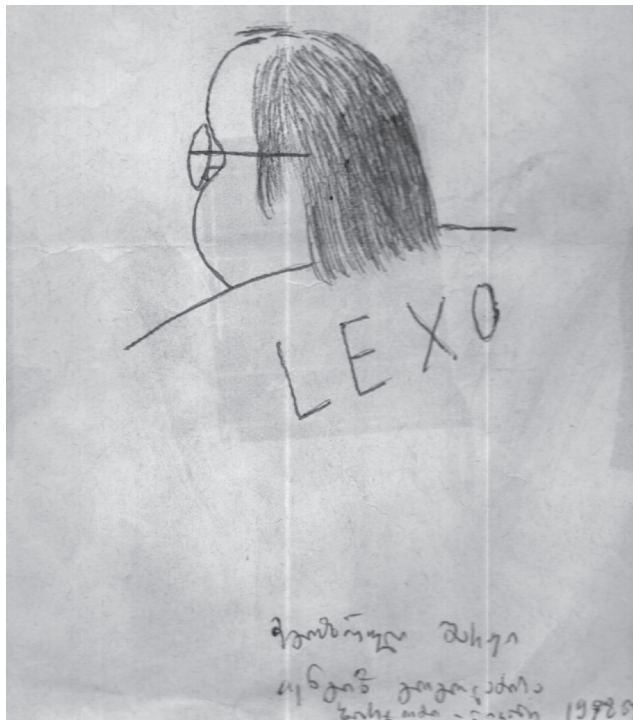
The Ella Fitzgerald story that Lexo told Behrouz, missing from our CD, is about the urgency of jazz in Soviet Russia – and how jazz vitally infiltrated the Toradze piano style. All this pertains to his interpretation of his father's Piano Concerto (which Lexo premiered and performed three times). Its jazzy pages are electrified by the physicality of Lexo's stabbing accents and syncopations. And doubtless Lexo found a story in the narrative pages. If he is no longer around to tell us what that story happened to be, and if the story actually coincided with what his father told him about the piece, it really doesn't matter – what matters (as I remark on film) is that Lexo's stories mattered to him.

Notwithstanding Lexo's enduring passion for the piano works of Ravel, his repertoire concentrated on four Russians: Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich. They have in common Russian turmoil. The first two lived in an exigent condition of exile they differently negotiated. The third quit his exile to return, controversially, to Mother Russia. The fourth experienced a kind of internal exile as a people's artist, a beneficiary and victim of the state.

The turmoil of Lexo's own exile was intermittent but cruel. He was born in 1952 to a family anchored in art. At the Moscow Conservatory, he thrived on the support of inspired pedagogues, but loudly feuded with others. Touring as a Soviet pianist, he was enthralled by new experience and infuriated by restrictions placed on his activities. He defected suddenly, in Spain in 1983, when he discovered himself travelling with a Russian orchestra and yet not permitted to perform. He wound up, incongruously, in South Bend, Indiana, where he created the Toradze Piano Studio. It toured widely, only to implode. His prolonged American honeymoon ultimately stranded him, a stranger in a strange land.

The final chapter of Lexo's life transpired in relative self-seclusion: in loving partnership with Siwon Kim, his final protege. When Vladimir Putin's Russia invaded Ukraine, Lexo's response was unique: he instantly foresaw that the Russian artistic environment in which he had been raised, and which had been his cherished inheritance for more than half a century, would be poisoned for decades to come. I have no doubt that this intuition hastened his death in 2022.

It was the magnitude of Lexo's presence – his particular breadth of experience and understanding – that ultimately sealed his contribution to the tumultuous decades he inhabited.



The Toradze Foundation

The Toradze family has made significant contributions to the arts and culture of Georgia. In recognition of their numerous achievements, Nino Toradze established the Toradze Foundation in 2022. The primary goal of the Foundation is to leverage the family's extensive international network and reputation to promote Georgian culture to a global audience. The Foundation aims to support young and emerging artists, providing them with the resources they need to develop their talents and showcase their work to a wider audience. Through its various programs and initiatives, the organization is committed to preserving and promoting the rich cultural legacy of Georgia, while also supporting the next generation of artists who will carry this legacy forward into the future.

The Toradze Foundation express its gratitude to Gocha, Zurab and Jimsher Chkhaidze for their support.

Executive producer : Ettore F. Volontieri

Translation from Georgian to English by Ekaterina Gamkrelidze

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natural sound recording
HiFi Reference

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