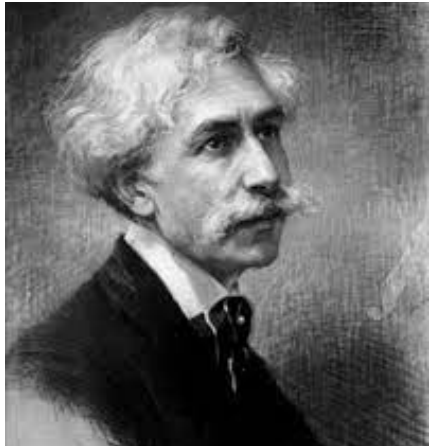


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## STÉPHAN ELMAS



Elmas's musical legacy remains firmly rooted in the romantic era. His trajectory is influenced by a pivotal element in his life story: the onset of deafness during his early twenties. Consequently, his compositions thereafter emerged solely from the wellspring of memory. Early influences by Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt endowed his music with nostalgic echoes. Paradoxically, this characteristic constitutes a significant facet of its appeal. A masterful melodist, Elmas bequeathed a substantial legacy of splendid compositions—over 120 solo piano pieces, a piano quartet, piano trio, a plethora of chamber music works, vocal compositions, and four piano concertos.

Stéphan Elmas is commonly referred to as the **Chopin of Armenia**, a designation that I hold in high esteem.

*...My music is dedicated to Armenia and to the armenian people!*

Stephan Elmas

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## LIFE OF COMPOSER

Born in Smyrna, now known as Izmir, Stéphan Elmas hailed from an Armenian merchant family. His birth fell on Christmas Day, and unfortunately, his mother passed away during childbirth, leading to his upbringing by his grandmother. Demonstrating prodigious talent, Stéphan Elmas exhibited remarkable piano prowess and drew inspiration, particularly from the compositions of Chopin and Schumann. Subsequently, he journeyed to Vienna, where he engaged in substantial correspondence with Franz Liszt.

During his sojourn in Vienna, the seventeen-year-old Stéphan adeptly divided his time between, in 1885, he made his debut in Vienna, an event that garnered considerable acclaim from the press. Elmas's creative output persisted, yielding an array of character pieces including waltzes, mazurkas, nocturnes, and impromptus. February 24, 1887, witnessed his triumphant performance at the Viennese Bösendorfer Hall, setting in motion a busy concert itinerary that encompassed artistic achievements across France, England, Germany, Austria, and Italy. His recitals predominantly showcased his own compositions, yet he also interpreted works by luminaries such as Beethoven, Chopin, and Schumann.

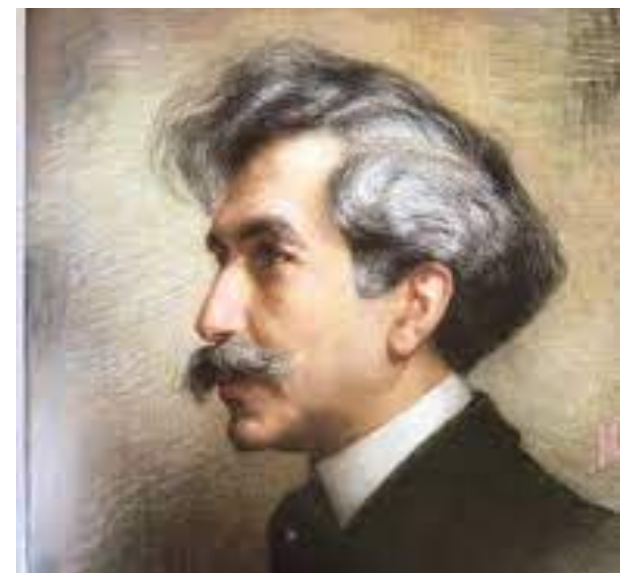
In 1912, Stéphan Elmas established a permanent abode in Geneva, Switzerland, where his compositional endeavors persisted alongside teaching and performing. His passing transpired in Geneva, leading to his interment in the Plainpalais Cemetery.

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## CHOPIN OF ARMENIA

Despite the absence of overt Armenian influences, Stéphan Elmas's profound connection to the Armenian cause remained unwavering, particularly in the face of the two calamitous events that befell the Armenian people in 1915 and 1922. The prominent Smyrna Fire of 1922 prompted his family's flight to Greece, an event that prompted Elmas to compose numerous funeral marches. The somber procession of his sonata's second movements symbolized this mournful period. The vehemence of his emotions, particularly his anger, found expression through his music. His words—**"My music is dedicated to the Armenian people"**—resonated through his letters.

The inception of the Stéphan Elmas Foundation in 1988, under the artistic leadership of Alexandre Siranossian, embodies the commitment to disseminating the legacy of the great Armenian composer.



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## THE SOUL OF SMYRNA

complete piano sonatas of Stéphan Elmas

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My life is intricately intertwined with Stéphan Elmas in a unique way. In 2002, I had the opportunity to participate in the Stéphan Elmas Piano Competition and was awarded the first prize—a truly joyous moment in my musical journey. Through this experience, I discovered the captivating world of composer Stéphan Elmas.

Three years ago, I embarked on a daring project to record his previously unplayed piano sonatas, effectively bringing them to life after a century. It holds a special allure for me that Stéphan Elmas himself could no longer hear these sounds due to his deafness. This fateful tragedy makes this musical journey all the more significant. His piano sonatas captivate with an impressive beauty rooted in their form, harmonic structures, melodies, and the deep emotions he infused into them—capable of profoundly touching the audience. My album,

**THE SOUL OF SMYRNA** featuring four piano sonatas by Stéphan Elmas, has swiftly garnered the interest of prominent radio stations, music publications, and music critics worldwide.

I'm consistently filled with awe. Even if the audience hadn't encountered this music before, I often hear that it feels remarkably familiar. Why? I believe its timeless naturalness resonates with the hearts of everyone. Stéphan Elmas' music has the power to reach the soul and ignite a sense of love for it as soon as it graces the ear. It's a truly inspiring experience that I enjoy sharing with others, strengthening my connection to this extraordinary composer.

*... Heghine Rapyan plays music of Stéphan Elmas with immense conviction.* ©BBC Music Magazine.

## AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

‘... in Heghine Rapyan, also an Armenian, Elmas has found his ideal interpreter. Her playing is consistently engaging and makes these modest works seem like minor masterpieces. She studied in Yerevan and Salzburg, where the late Ingrid Haebler served as mentor and where she is currently teaching. I hope she will record more Armenian music. The sound is excellent. Sit back and enjoy.

