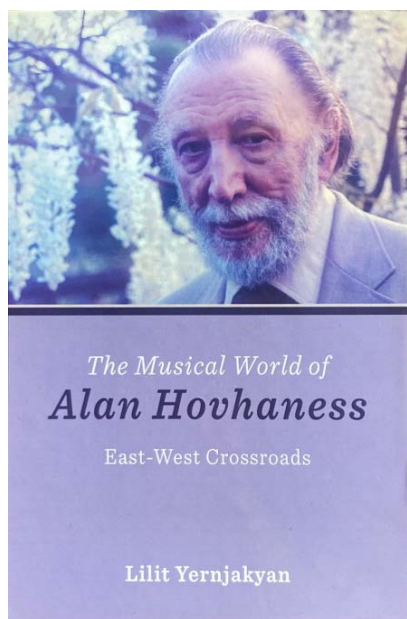


Lilit Yernjakyán, *The Musical World of Alan Hovhaness: East-West Crossroads*, "Cambridge Scholars Publishing", 2023, 130 p.



By the decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, the UK based "Cambridge Scholars Publishing" has published the English study by the Doctor of Arts, Professor Lilit Yernjakyán titled "The Musical World of Alan Hovhaness: East-West Crossroads," which the author dedicated to the memory of her teacher, musicologist, composer, Honoured Worker of the Armenian SSR, professor Robert Atayan. Lilit Yernjakyán is a leading researcher at the Music Department of the Institute of Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, Member of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Arts and the Professional Council of Art Studies 016, Chairwoman of the Management Board of the Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory,

Honoured Worker of Art of the Republic of Armenia.

This work presents the creative activity of Alan Hovhaness (Alan Vaness Chakmakjian, 1911, Somerville – 2000, Seattle), one of the prominent representatives of Diaspora Armenian music, talented American-Armenian composer, conductor, pianist, organist, in the context of East-West cultural interactions. The monograph is based on the author's MA thesis, which has been supplemented and enriched over the decades with the inclusion of new factual materials and observations. Accordingly, a number of scientific articles have been published in previous years, and in 2015, by the decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Art of the NAS RA, the "Science" Publishing House of the NAS RA published the Armenian monograph "The Music of Alan Hovhaness at East-West Crossroads."

Nevertheless, L. Yernjakyán continued her scientific research, as a result of which important additions were made. In this English monograph, for the first time, valuable materials extracted from the studies of the previously unpublished correspondence of two talented American-Armenians, William Saroyan and Alan Hovhaness, have been put into scientific circulation, which is a proof of friendly and creative relations between the writer and the composer.

"The Musical World of Alan Hovhaness: East-West Crossroads" is written on the basis of rich archival material, foreign language sources and information extracted from the press, in which the author presented the composer's creative path, revealed the principles of perception of the special features of Armenian monodic music and their reproduction, examining the ancient Indian, Japanese and Korean musical manifestations of traditions in his works.

L. Yernjakyán studied the materials of the composer's personal archive kept in Charents Museum of Literature and Arts in Yerevan and also thoroughly examined the research on Alan Hovhaness kept in the libraries of American universities and the reviews and articles published in the periodical press. By the way, L. Yernjakyán acquired the correspondence between Alan Hovhaness and William Saroyan from Saroyan's archive kept in Stanford University's Department of Special Collections and Archives Library in California.

L. Yernjakyán set aim of presenting the foundations of the perception and principles of reflection of the East in the work of a Western composer, which is considered through the revelation of the Armenian identity of the composer. This thesis is emphasized in various sections of the monograph. The author of the work explains the turn of the composer of Armenian-Scottish origin to the East with a conscious perception of Armenian identity: "Armenianness, as is shown in the present research, is not restricted to a particular stage in the composer's life. It was the awareness of his cultural identity and the foundations of Armenian national culture that inspired the composer turn to the East, as evident in many works on the Eastern themes. Armenianness, far from being a mere chronological period in the composer's creative biography, was a revelation of his own self, a key to self-realization, and a firm basis for his musical journey to different Eastern cultures." (p. xii).

Incidentally, L. Yernjakyán's fundamental studies are devoted to the problems of Armenian-Iranian, Armenian-Turkish musical connections between traditional and classical music of the East, Armenian spiritual and ashugh musical art. However, for many years, the musicologist's scientific interests have included the East-West cultural problem and issues related to contemporary compositional art.

The monograph structure is solid and logical. It consists of five chapters.

In the first chapter, "Alan Hovhaness: Creative Pilgrimage", L. Yernjakyán comprehensively and with interest opens the pages of the composer's life and work, acquaints the reader with the general panorama of his life and work as a composer, conductor and performer. The author describes in detail the key stages of the composer's creative activity, emphasizes the importance of the 1940-1950 Armenian period of the creative chronicle, which was a decisive stage both in the composer's further rise and recognition as well as in his acceptance and glorification in world music. As we learn from the materials included in this section, Alan Hovhaness's creative abilities appeared at the age of four. He received his initial education at Taft

School of Music and then continued his studies at New England Conservatory in Boston, in Frederick Converse's professional class. In 1942, Tanglewood University in Boston awarded Alan Hovhaness a scholarship to study under Czech composer Bohuslav Martinu, which he left unfinished.

Alan Hovhannes wrote his first operas, "Lotus Blossom" and "Bluebeard and Daniel", at the age of 14. The prolific composer of many genres authored more than hundreds of musical works, 67 of which were symphonies. As a matter of fact, the composer rejected and destroyed more than 500 works of his first creative period (1930-1940). His works were published and sold for 17 years by "Edition Peters" publishing house.

Alan Hovhaness was awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Rochester (1958), Bates College (1959), Boston Conservatory (1986) and a number of other institutions.

In the second chapter of the book, "The East Illuminated in West Music," the author presents the genealogical origins of the appeal to Eastern musical culture, as well as using descriptive and documentary materials to reveal the influence and continuous presence of the East in various stages of the formation of Western musical culture.

In the third chapter, "Alan Hovhaness -William Saroyan Correspondence: National Identity Manifestations," L. Yernjakyan has selected from the composer's collection of letters and for the first time analyzed the extensive correspondence with William Saroyan that lasted for decades. Accordingly, the author has revealed the awareness of national identity, manifestations and commonalities, underlying the spiritual-creative connection of the two great personalities, their groundbreaking initiatives and enthusiasm for finding unique ways of self-expression and presented a general picture of the songs, musicals, rhapsodies, films, and musical theater performances that were born from creative collaboration. The musical "Girakgi Picnic," created in 1941, has been examined in detail, which describes the traditions depicting the daily life of Western Armenians, emphasizing the idea of a lost home. As the author notes: "The examination reveals that the minds of the two great Armenians were occupied with presenting to the world all the colors of their memories of the once-upon-a-time home, Western Armenia, and trying to identify pillars conducive to maintaining their identity in a foreign environment" (p. 28).

The fourth chapter of the monograph, "Alan Hovhaness's Armenian Works," consists of two subsections. The first one, "The Tragic Pages of Armenian History in Alan Hovhaness's Works", presents one of the first symphonic works dedicated to the Armenian Genocide, the "Exile" Symphony (1937), which was Hovhaness's "first public confession" of his new identity, which clarified his "spiritual state".

The second subsection, "Stylistic and Genre Peculiarities of Armenian-titled Works," is devoted to the examination of the most striking, artistically interesting, and genre-rich works of the Armenian style. Accordingly, the author has singled out

and analyzed the “Ararat” Symphony for brass orchestra (1960), the “Saint Vardan” Symphony for string orchestra (1950), the “Anahid” Fantasy, the 2nd and 3rd “Armenian Rhapsodies” for string orchestra, the “Dawn” for piano and string orchestra (1944), the “Lake of Van” Sonata (1946) and the “Akhtamar” (1948) piece for piano and 12 Armenian folk songs arranged for piano.

In the fifth chapter, “Alan Hovhaness’s “Eastern” Works”, L. Yernjakyan presents Alan Hovhaness’s symphonic and chamber works written on oriental themes, which are based on the ancient traditions of Indian, Japanese, and Korean music. By the way, Alan Hovhaness’s pen includes works written on Chinese, Persian, and Hawaiian themes, as well as a number of small canvases on Ossetian, Kyrgyz, Kurdish, Greek and other Eastern themes. Accordingly, the works selected for study in the monograph typically reveal both the principles of the embodiment of traditional genres in composer’s music, as well as the factor of East-West cultural interaction.

This section examines Symphony No. 8 “Arjuna” for piano, timpani and orchestra (1947), the “Madras” Sonata for piano (1947), the composition “Nagooran” for an orchestra composed of South Indian instruments (1960), the chamber work “Koke No Niwa” (“Mossy Garden”) for English horn, percussion and lyre (1954), the opera-drama “The Burning House,” the composition “Fantasy on Japanese Wood Prints” written for an orchestra with a conventional composition (according to the venue and possibilities of performance and including brass, percussion and string groups, as well as piano and xylophone, 1964), the symphonies No. 15 “Silver Pilgrimage” (1962) and No. 16 (1962). L. Yernjakyan notes that Alan Hovhaness’s Eastern works demonstrate common principles and the presence of an Armenian element.

In the third and fourth sections of the monograph, which are mainly analytical in nature, the author examines the intonation, mode, metrical, and melodic features of each work in a stylistic and structural manner, indicates the general nature of the work, outlines the characteristic features of the Eastern style and draws musicological generalizations.

As a result of studying Alan Hovhaness’s music, L. Yernjakyan concludes: “The music of Alan Hovhaness is unbounded in its genre and thematic diversity and is characterized by a wide range of associations with the East as well as by a profound understanding of the aesthetic and philosophical concepts of various Eastern cultural realities and their musical re-creation and interpretation.” (p. 112), then: “Alan Hovhaness enriched contemporary Western music with Eastern musical idioms and characteristic elements of modal and rhythmic organization of the Armenian monody, and viewed Eastern music as an important inspiration for the development of twentieth-century music, thus, making a significant contribution to the on-going process of cultural interconnections between the East and the West. His music gained its strength from these two powerful trends in music

and, in this sense, the composer can be said to have perfectly accomplished his mission.”(p. 117).

One of the important merits of the work is the inclusion and analysis of interesting works endowed with a variety of artistic trends, which provides an opportunity to form a complete picture of the composer's main Eastern and Armenian preferences, artistic taste and way of thinking in his works.

Lilit Yernjakyan's monograph is probably the first work by an Armenian musicologist to be published by the British “Cambridge Scholars Publishing”.

The work is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to the study of Armenology and Diaspora Armenian music, which I believe will contribute to the popularization of Alan Hovhaness's works in Armenia and abroad.

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