

ALAN HOVHANNES

Concerto No. 2 • Works for Violin and Piano

Zina Schiff, Violin • Valerie Stark, Piano

Salzburg Chamber Soloists • Avlana Eisenberg



	Concerto No. 2 for Violin and Strings, Op. 89a (1951–57)	21:47
1	I. Pastoral	2:16
2	II. Aria	3:51
3	III. Allegro	1:41
4	IV. Aria	2:06
5	V. Presto	2:07
6	VI. Recitative and Lullaby	5:36
7	VII. Hymn	4:05
8	Yeraz (Երազ / ‘The Dream’), Op. 56, No. 2 (1945)	4:55
	Khirgiz Suite, Op. 73, No. 1 (1951)	6:41
9	I. Variations	3:30
10	II. A Khirgiz Tala	1:29
11	III. Allegro molto	1:36
12	Les Baux, Op. 261 (1973)	5:38
	Violin Sonata, Op. 11 (1937)	14:19
13	I. Allegro	5:52
14	II. Andante sostenuto	3:23
15	III. Allegro moderato	4:55
	Three Visions of Saint Mesrob, Op. 198 (1962)	8:22
16	No. 1. Celestial Mountain	3:50
17	No. 2. Celestial Bird	1:53
18	No. 3. Celestial Alphabet	2:29
19	Varak (Վարազ), Op. 47a (1944)	5:38
20	Oror (Օրոր / ‘Lullaby’), Op. 1 (1922/26) (arr. Dana Paul Perna [b. 1958] for violin, strings and harp, 2016)	2:55

Recorded: 25 September 2016 at the Wiener Saal, Salzburg Mozarteum, Austria 1–7 20
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Engineers: Aaron Holloway-Nahum 1–7 20, John Weston 8–19

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Alan Hovhaness (1911–2000)

Concerto No. 2 • Works for Violin and Piano

Alan Hovhaness was born on 8 March 1911 in Somerville, Massachusetts. His father was Armenian and his mother was Scottish. An only child, with a curious and spiritual nature, Hovhaness busied himself reading, writing, painting, and walking in the mountains and forests. He was drawn to both Eastern and Western cultures, and as his distinctive musical style evolved, he artfully brought together these diverse approaches in over 500 compositions.

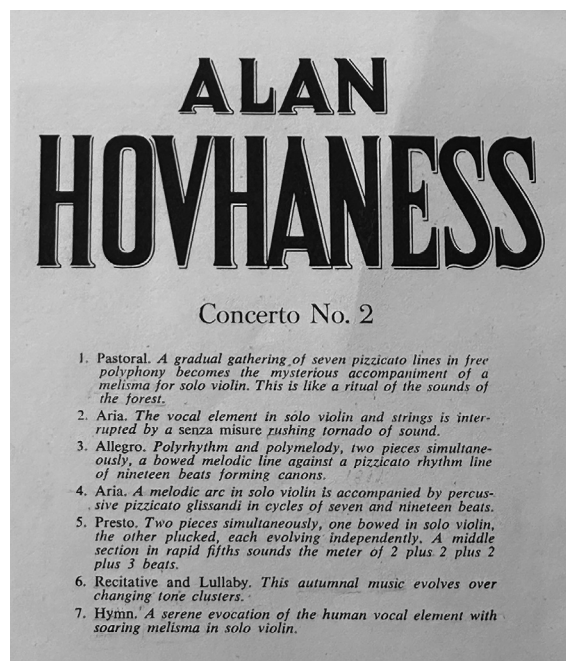
Hovhaness studied at Tufts University, where his father was a chemistry professor, and at the New England Conservatory with Frederick Converse. Hovhaness idolized Jean Sibelius, traveling to Finland to meet the composer in 1935. Sibelius would become the godfather of Hovhaness's daughter, named Jean Christina. As an organist at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown, Massachusetts, Hovhaness became steeped in Armenian liturgical music, and he was especially attracted to the minimalist style of composer-priest Komitas Vartabed (1869–1935). Hovhaness's Armenian connections led him to pivotal friendships with violinist and pianist sisters Anahid and Maro Ajemian, who championed his music. He wrote the score to Clifford Odets's Broadway play *The Flowering Peach* and composed for dancer and choreographer Martha Graham. He studied Carnatic music in India on a Fulbright Fellowship, and traveled to Japan to study Asian music. Hovhaness taught at Boston Conservatory and the Eastman School of Music. In 1977, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

During the last three decades of his life, Hovhaness resided in Seattle, Washington, where he enjoyed a close and fruitful association with Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony. Hovhaness died on 21 June 2000.

Hovhaness captures both the intimate and global with microscopic focus and telescopic wonder. Colleague and composer Lou Harrison deemed Hovhaness "one of the great melodists of the 20th century."

Concerto No. 2 for Violin and Strings, Op. 89a

Hovhaness includes brief program notes, written in the score, for his seven-movement *Concerto for Solo Violin and String Orchestra*.



Beyond the evocative titles, Hovhaness details the effects he employs. The Greek word for melody, *melisma*, immediately sets a magical mood. *Senza misura*, a term brought to prominence by maverick American composer Henry Cowell, instructs the performer to play without strict measure. In this case, Hovhaness gives further information on the score and orchestral parts "...as rapid as possible but not together ... repeat ad lib ..." in order to create the "rushing tornado of sound."

"Tone cluster", an innovation also established by Cowell, is a dissonant, closely spaced group of notes, sounded simultaneously. Pianists can play these by plunking their arms on the keys. Hovhaness utilizes a different approach for the string instruments: plucked, vibrated chords and grace notes.

Yeraz (Երազ / 'The Dream'), Op. 56, No. 2

Yeraz begins with a slow improvisatory theme in a distinctly Eastern flavor. As the melody expands, repeating itself with increasing intensity and in higher registers, it suddenly stops and segues into a lively folk dance, which also expands, repeating itself in higher registers, until with a jolt, the dreamer awakens.

Khirciz Suite, Op. 73, No. 1

"Khirciz" refers to a Turkish ethnic group native to Central Asia. Hovhaness designates the entire first movement, *Variations*, as *senza misura*. The hazy pedaled piano triplets in the *Adagio* give way to raindrop-like repeated notes and oddly placed chord interjections, while the violin weaves a hypnotic theme. The second movement, *A Khirciz Tala*, flirts and shimmers with Indian rhythmic patterns (*tala*), each bar containing 15 beats. The third movement, *Allegro molto*, returns to a steady two-beat dancing rhythm.

Les Baux, Op. 261

The title stems from a Ligurian term for steep cliffs or rock promontories. Renowned for its historic medieval streets, charming squares, and luscious wine, Les Baux was a favorite destination in Provence for the mountain-loving composer. Hovhaness inches us to the edge of the mountain, where the dizzying, dazzling views command.

Violin Sonata, Op. 11

The *Sonata* showcases Hovhaness's signature synthesis of Eastern and Western harmonies and style. Within a Classical sonata-structured form, he writes tunes featuring exotic tonal twists. The meditative chorale-like *Adante sostenuto* haunts with its muted violin solo, reminiscent of Armenian liturgical music; while the *Allegro moderato* jumps to Hovhaness's Scottish roots, a rousing finale with pulsating rhythms.

Three Visions of Saint Mesrob, Op. 198

Saint Mesrob was a legendary Christian missionary who lived in Armenia in c. 360–440, and is said to have invented the Armenian alphabet. A linguist and composer, he translated the Christian Bible into Armenian and was venerated as a saint.

Celestial Mountain begins with a quintessential Hovhaness direction, “possibly,” plus a metronome marking. The movement, written in a 7/4 time, creates a mystical mood. The violin line is cantorial in nature, and Hovhaness notates “sliding” to emphasize the vocal inflections he desires.

Celestial Bird also begins with “possibly” and an added instruction of *senza misura*. The piano begins, imitating the fluttering of birds' wings. Hovhaness instructs “violin may begin at any time.” The violin takes flight on her pathway, mingling with the piano's “twittering of celestial birds.” Hovhaness then asks the pianist to “repeat the celestial sounds of rhythm-less twittering as many times as necessary and beginning the ending possibly during the last three measures of the violin part.” Amazingly, the violin part has bar measures! The movement ends with a “twittering of celestial birds *senza misura*.”

The third movement, *Celestial Alphabet*, yet again begins with Hovhaness's “possibly.” The elemental quality of the melodic lines, groping for cohesion, suggests building blocks linking into expression.

Varak (Վարազ), Op. 47a

Varak refers to a mountain range in Armenia considered sacred as the site of a monastery and the Holy Cross church. In Indian culture, “Varak” describes gold and silver leaf, something delicate yet regal and strong. Hovhaness titles the first section of *Varak* as *Andante, noble and majestic*. The second section, simply marked *Allegro*, is a vibrant folk dance.

Oror (Օրոր / ‘Lullaby’), Op. 1

Hovhaness's melodic talents and fascination with Eastern and Western musical traditions shine even in his *Opus 1*. The piano score, with its harp-like accompaniment, cried out to be orchestrated. We are grateful to Dana Paul Perna for the gift of his artful arrangement.

Zina Schiff

This release is dedicated to my first violin teacher, my sister Eileen, who encouraged me to explore and promote American music.

Zina Schiff



Violinist Zina Schiff, a Heifetz protégée and Curtis alumna, has performed, recorded and given masterclasses on five continents. In the United States, she has given solo performances with the orchestras of Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Rochester, Brooklyn, San Antonio, Nashville, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle, among others. Her first recording was the solo violin score for MGM's *The Fixer*, composed by Academy Award winner Maurice Jarre. Her debut albums, *Bach & Vivaldi* and *The Lark Ascending* (Stradivari Classics), were as soloist with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Her first solo albums, *Here's One* and *King David's Lyre* (4Tay Records), with pianist Cameron Grant, were selected Best of 1997 by *American Record Guide* and produced by Dana Paul Perna, arranger of Hovhaness's *Oror*. Four MSR Classics recordings include a critically acclaimed recording of Sibelius, Barber and Ben-Haim conducted by Avlana Eisenberg. Of Schiff's 17 albums to date, her previous Naxos releases are award-winning albums Cecil Burleigh – Music for Violin and Piano (8.559061) produced by her daughter, Cherina Carmel, and Ernest Bloch's *Concerto* and suites (8.557757) and William Grant Still's *Summerland* (8.559867), both with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Valerie Stark



A highly sought after pianist, teacher and collaborator based in the western suburbs of Boston, Valerie Stark finds great joy in working with other musicians, both students and professionals. A devoted church musician, she serves as an officer for the Boston Alumni Chapter of Mu Phi Epsilon fraternity and Massachusetts Music Teachers Association. For more than 30 years she and her husband developed and directed an annual Christmas Choir, which was known for bringing musical cheer to unexpected places each December, and she accompanied four choruses daily for over 20 years at Wellesley Middle School. A graduate of Houghton University and Boston University, she studied piano with C. Nolan Huizenga, Edith Stearns and Maria Clodes Jaguaribe, and jazz with Ed Mascari. As a fan of all things vocal, she studied voice at the Estill Vocal Training Institute, including with Judith Balo Goff.

Salzburg Chamber Soloists



Founded in 1991 by Brazilian-born musician Lavard Skou-Larsen together with a handful of his colleagues, the Salzburg Chamber Soloists features orchestral chamber music repertoire performed with the freedom and approach of soloists. The ensemble's inspiration was the famed Sándor Végh, whose teaching and passion for music influenced many members of the group. The ensemble has performed at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Philharmonie Berlin, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Tonhalle Zurich, Theatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro and Sala São Paulo. It has toured in the United States and regularly performs at European festivals, including in its home city. The Salzburg Chamber Soloists has released recordings on Denon and Coviello Classics.

www.salcsol.com

Avlana Eisenberg



Acclaimed conductor Avlana Eisenberg is a passionately committed advocate for emerging and underrepresented American composers, new works, and making symphonic music accessible for all. She is music director of the Boston Chamber Symphony, and has led orchestras throughout the United States, Europe and the United Kingdom. Her recent discography includes a Naxos recording of world premieres by William Grant Still with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, acclaimed by *The New York Times* and selected as Album of the Week by SiriusXM, and a Sibelius/Barber/Ben-Haim album with the Budapest Symphony Orchestra MAV, which was praised in *Gramophone* magazine. A recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship to work with the Opéra national de Paris, Eisenberg earned her undergraduate degree at Yale University, where she received the V. Browne Irish Award for Excellence in the Performing Arts and was named a Top Ten College Winner by *Glamour* magazine. She also graduated with degrees in conducting from the University of Michigan and the Peabody Institute.

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A detailed track list with full recording and publishers' details
can be found inside the booklet

Booklet notes: Zina Schiff

With deepest gratitude to: Mrs. Hovhaness (Hinako Fujihara),
Dana Paul Perna, Arman Darian, Jerry Schwarz,
Bill Siegmund, John Weston, Jeff Stark, Ron and Cherina

Cover: Armenian pottery by Arman Darian

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

The music of Alan Hovhaness, one of America's most prolific composers, enchants with his signature synthesis of East and West. Influenced by his Armenian heritage and a fascination with nature and spirituality Hovhaness sought to create music “for all people, music which is beautiful and healing.” This collection of works featuring the violin includes several premiere recordings. *Concerto No. 2*, one of a series of ten concertos for various instruments, requires the soloist and ensemble to play using distinctive effects including tone clusters, melisma, and playing without strict measure. Evocations of Armenian liturgy contrasted with dizzying Scottish jigs can be heard in the *Violin Sonata*.

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