



AMERICAN CLASSICS



Alan
HOVHANESS

Symphony No. 48 'Vision of Andromeda'

Prelude and Quadruple Fugue • Soprano Saxophone Concerto

Greg Banaszak, Soprano Saxophone

Eastern Music Festival Orchestra • Gerard Schwarz



Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000): Symphony No. 48, Op. 355 'Vision of Andromeda'
Prelude and Quadruple Fugue, Op. 128 • Concerto for Soprano Saxophone and Strings, Op. 344

"A certain form of beauty has its place in the world. Naturally, ugliness is important, but there should be a balance between beauty and ugliness. If everything is ugly, if I only hear the noise in the street, the noise of traffic – this certainly isn't music. (Especially us today in living, having to cross a street everyday – I think we need something besides that.) And we may be satisfied by some kind of beauty – not a beauty which merely copies a beauty of 100 years ago and 200 years ago, but our own beauty, a new kind of beauty."

Alan Hovhaness, CBC Interview, October 1968

My husband was a master of counterpoint. The creation of his own music was based upon his knowledge of that intellectual principle of music, combined with his originality and inspiration.

He composed 67 symphonies and his opuses numbered 434, not including the hundreds of compositions without opus numbers. He started composing at a young age and continued until near the end of his life. After his death in the year 2000, interest in his music has continuously increased all over the world.

I believe Alan's music will be here to stay as long as our civilisation continues and he will be remembered as one of the most beloved composers in the history of music.

Prelude and Quadruple Fugue

This work was originally written in 1936 when Alan was 25 years old. It was a work in four movements: *Prelude* and then three other movements in fugue) and he called it *String Quartet No. 1, Op. 8*. He had been asked to write a double fugue, and he thought of J.S. Bach's *Art of Fugue*, ending with a quadruple fugue – so he challenged himself to write a quadruple fugue.

Later on, in 1954, he combined it into one movement and orchestrated it for full orchestra, calling it *Prelude and*



Quadruple Fugue. It was dedicated to Dr. Howard Hanson and the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra for the 25th Anniversary of the Festival of American Music in 1955.

I think this piece is Alan's masterpiece, the most exciting work he ever wrote. It is like a sweeping wind building up to a climactic ending!

Concerto for Soprano Saxophone and Strings

The *Concerto for Soprano Saxophone and Strings, Op. 344*, was composed in 1980. Alan was commissioned by the New England Conservatory of Music on October 10, 1980, to compose a work specifically for saxophone. The contract does not say who it was to be written for.

That was it – we didn't know anything more about this composition until we got a première performance tape from some source. (Usually we got an invitation to attend any premieres of his works or at least to let him know about them – but not in this case.) It was performed by the Chautauqua Symphony, conducted by Varujan Kojian, with soloist Harvey Pittel.

That was the last I heard of this work – until 2005, when, out of the blue, Greg Banaszak, a saxophonist from Ohio, approached me and asked to record it. That recording took place in Poland in July 2006. This concerto is the most Romantic concerto my husband ever wrote.

Just before I met Alan, in 1973, he had already started writing 'Romantic' music. As usual, he intuitively sensed the new direction of music – Neo-Romanticism, that which was very much needed at that time of non-melodic, non-emotional contemporary music.

In the 1970s he had started to write songs for me because he loved my voice. My voice was extremely high, but it was not shrill (as are many coloratura voices). He said that if my voice were an instrument, it would be an oboe. And so his writing got higher and higher; for this concerto solo he wrote to the highest limits of the soprano saxophone's range. Also, this work is not written as the usual concerto – to show off the soloist's skill – but rather as a melodic tone poem or aria.

Greg Banaszak, the soloist for this concerto, intuitively understood the composer's insight and intention of this piece and performs with the most beautiful and expressive of tones.

Symphony No. 48 'Vision of Andromeda'

This symphony is inspired by the wonders and mysteries of astronomy, and the giant galaxy of Andromeda, with other galaxies rotating around it. The music is in four movements:

ANDANTE: A giant melody begins in the violas over rhythm cycles and a 'spirit murmur' in violins. Gamelan-like rivers of stars in percussion bells are heard as an interlude and postlude to the long melody.

ALLEGRO: a fugue, brilliant and dance-like.

ANDANTE: Allegro moderato. In this delicate, oriental-like movement, a solo bassoon sings a melismatic hymn which continues in solo flute in a more dance-like style.

LARGO SOLENNE: Allegro maestoso. Over divided strings the horns sing a hymn to the stars. A gamelan of bell percussion creates star-like rivers of sound. Violins sing a religious melody to the galaxies. A fugue built on the horn motif which was heard at the beginning of this movement develops in choral style into a grand alleluia-like climax. The symphony ends with a gamelan of stars, going out into the universe.

Alan Hovhaness

This work was premièred on June 21, 1982, during the New World Festival in Miami, Florida by the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Leonard Slatkin. The Festival had been very ambitiously planned, and lasted one whole month, with performances of plays, dances, operas, and symphonies – and included many well-known performers.

Alan had received the commission from the Festival in March of 1981 to write music for one of those performances; shortly after that, he completed the symphony and sent it to the Minnesota Orchestra. Sometime later, we were at the Interlocken Center for the Arts when a call came through and Alan answered it. It was from the manager of the Minnesota Orchestra, criticising Alan's new symphony. Alan took it very hard, so this symphony was overlooked and stumbled from the start.

At the second performance, however, an unexpected thing happened. Just before Alan's symphony, the conductor stepped up to the podium and, instead of conducting the orchestra, turned to the audience and spoke. He expressed his reflection of Alan's work: "This enormous subject of Andromeda – no human can imagine or write about it. I think this composition is rather a mental vision or insight of the composer Mr. Hovhaness." I think he came to understand this piece after he had performed it the day before and the second performance was done in a different spirit.

Astronomy was Alan's life-time interest, along with music. In his youth, while other boys were playing sports, his interest was 'the sky.' He even built a tree house all by himself, called it his observatory, and watched the stars in the sky.

I knew how important this symphony 'Vision of Andromeda' was to Alan; moreover, because of his heart-

breaking experience with its première, I felt I needed to do something for this piece for Alan's sake. And so I approached Mr. Heymann, the chairman of Naxos and expressed my wish to record it for the Naxos label. He generously acknowledged my request and directed me to talk to Maestro Schwarz. With the Maestro's help and the cooperation of the Eastern Music Festival, this recording was made in July 2013, conducted by Maestro Schwarz, Hovhaness's long-time champion – who understands and respects my husband's music.

I remember that Alan was hearing music in his head all the time, so for him, travelling into the galaxy of Andromeda was an endless journey – so he wrote, and wrote, and wrote! So relax – and let him take us with him on his never-ending journey to giant Andromeda!

Hinako Fujihara Hovhaness
Edited by Daniel Shelhamer

Greg Banaszak



Photo: Robert Wetzler

Greg Banaszak, one of today's leading saxophonists, has performed with orchestras and in concert halls throughout the world. He has appeared as a concerto soloist and recitalist throughout the United States, Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, including the countries of France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Sweden, Belgium, Egypt, South Korea, the Dominican Republic, Finland and Japan. As a member of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences, he serves as a voting member for the annual GRAMMY® Awards ceremony. He is currently on the faculties of the Baldwin-Wallace Conservatory, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and Case Western Reserve University. He has performed as saxophonist for the Cleveland Orchestra and the Berlin Opera Symphoniker. Greg Banaszak is a B.M. *cum laude* graduate of the Hartt School of Music. He holds a M.M. degree "with distinction" from the Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw and an Artist Diploma from the Centre Musical d'Annecy in France.

Eastern Music Festival Faculty Orchestra



Photo: Mark Wagoner

For 53 years, the Eastern Music Festival Faculty Orchestra has been a part of the Greensboro, North Carolina community, attracting the best professional orchestral musicians from around the world. For five weeks each summer these musicians practise and perform together, as well as teach pre-professional musicians ages 14-23, who gain admission to the Eastern Music Festival through a rigorous application and audition process. American conductor Gerard Schwarz leads the Eastern Music Festival Faculty Orchestra. He is internationally recognized for his moving performances, innovative programming and extensive catalogue of recordings, and also serves as the Jack Benaroya Conductor Laureate of the Seattle Symphony.

Gerard Schwarz



Photo: Steve Sherman

Internationally recognized for his innovative programming and extensive catalogue of recordings, American conductor Gerard Schwarz serves as Music Director of the All-Star Orchestra and the Eastern Music Festival and is Conductor Laureate of the Seattle Symphony. The All-Star Orchestra features a handpicked ensemble of star players from America's leading orchestras who come together for an eight episode American Public Television series designed to encourage a greater understanding and enjoyment of classical music. They are featured on four Naxos DVDs [2.110348, 49, 50 and 51]. Some 350 recordings with leading orchestras from all over the world testify to his achievement.

Schwarz began his professional career as co-principal trumpet of the New York Philharmonic and has held leadership positions with the Mostly Mozart Festival, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the New York Chamber Symphony. As a guest conductor in both opera and symphonic repertoire, he has worked with many of the world's finest orchestras and opera companies. A renowned interpreter of nineteenth-century German, Austrian and Russian repertoire, in addition to his noted work with contemporary American composers, Gerard Schwarz completed his final season as music director of the Seattle Symphony in 2011 after 26 acclaimed years, a period of dramatic artistic growth for the ensemble. In his nearly five decades as a respected musician, conductor and composer, Schwarz has received hundreds of honours and accolades including Emmy Awards, GRAMMY® nominations, ASCAP Awards and the Ditson Conductor's Award. He was the first American named Conductor of the Year by *Musical America* and has received numerous honorary doctorates. Most recently, the City of Seattle named the street alongside the Benaroya Hall "Gerard Schwarz Place".

Alan
HOVHANESS
(1911-2000)

- ❶ **Prelude and Quadruple Fugue,
Op. 128 (1936, rev. 1954) 6:59**
- Concerto for Soprano Saxophone
and Strings, Op. 344 (1980)† 18:59**
- ❷ **I. Andante – Allegretto espressivo – Fuga 7:21**
- ❸ **II. Adagio espressivo – Allegro assai 5:03**
- ❹ **III. Let The Living and The Celestial Sing 6:35**
- Symphony No. 48 ‘Vision of
Andromeda’, Op. 355 (1982)* 29:50**
- ❺ **I. Andante 10:06**
- ❻ **II. Fugue allegro 3:11**
- ❼ **III. Andante – Allegro moderato 4:05**
- ❽ **IV. Largo solenne – Allegro maestoso –
Andante maestoso espressivo 12:28**

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Greg Banaszak, Soprano Saxophone†

Eastern Music Festival Orchestra

Gerard Schwarz

Recorded at the Eastern Music Festival, Dana Auditorium,
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(Photographer: Michael Ter-Minasian)
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AMERICAN CLASSICS

Alan Hovhaness’s remarkable legacy of 67 symphonies and hundreds of other works stands as a testimony to one of the most individual musical voices of the 20th century. Written when Hovhaness was 25, the *Prelude and Quadruple Fugue* represents not only his mastery of counterpoint but in its sweeping climactic form is also one of his most exciting works. The *Soprano Saxophone Concerto* is like a melodic tone poem or aria, and considered the most Romantic concerto Hovhaness ever wrote. “Inspired by the wonders and mysteries of astronomy” and appearing here in its première recording, the *Symphony No. 48 ‘Vision of Andromeda’* expresses the vastness of this galaxy through giant melodies, shimmering orchestral colors and a transcendent apotheosis.

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Playing
Time:
55:48