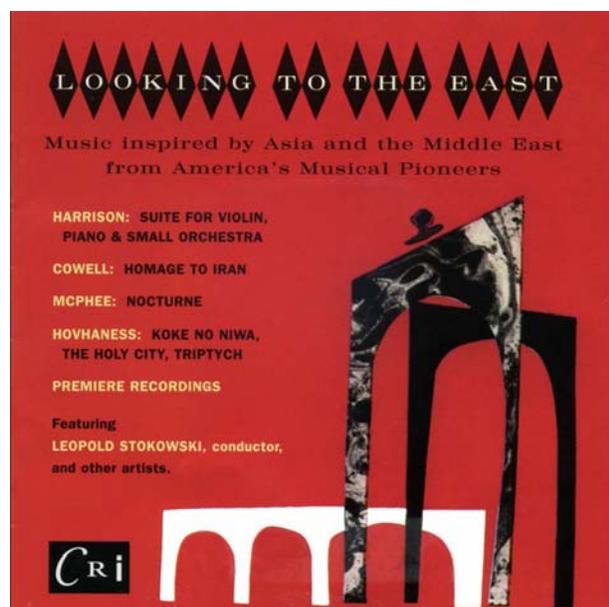


NWCR836

LOOKING TO THE EAST

Music Inspired by Asia & the Orient
From America's Musical Pioneers



Lou Harrison (b 1917)

Suite for Violin, Piano & Small Orchestra (1951) (16:44)

1. Overture: Allegro poco
Maestoso; Allegro (3:31)
2. Elegy: Adagio (2:26)
3. First Gamelan: Allegro (3:25)
4. Aria: Lento espressivo (2:51)
5. Second Gamelan: Allegro Moderato (2:04)
6. Chorale: Andante Moderato (2:28)

Anahid Ajemian, violin; Maro Ajemian, piano;
Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra; George Ricci
and Harvey Shapiro, cellos; Jesse Teiko, bass;
Murray Panitz and Robert E. Morris, flutes; Jerome
Roth, oboe; William Masselos, piano; Jascha Zayde,
celesta; Gloria Agostini, harp; Carroll Bratman,
percussion; Leopold Stokowski, conductor

Henry Cowell (1897–1965)

Homage to Iran for Violin & Piano (1959) (12:46)

7. I. Andante rubato (5:30)
8. II. Interlude (1:06)
9. III. Andante rubato (2:28)
10. IV. Con spirito (3:40)

Leopold Avakian, violin, Mitchell Andrews,
piano; Basil Bahar, Persian drum

Colin McPhee (1901–1964)

11. *Nocturne* for Chamber Orchestra (1958) (7:13)
Hessian Radio Symphony Orchestra; David Van
Vactor, conductor

Alan Hovhaness (b 1911)

12. *Koke No Niwa* (Moss Garden) (1954, rev. 1960)..... (6:32)
for English Horn, Percussion, and Harp, Op. 181;
Melvin Kaplan, English horn; Walter Rosenberger,
Elden Bailey, percussion; Ruth Negri, harp; Alan
Hovhaness, conductor

13. *The Holy City*, Op. 218 (1965) (8:25)
for Trumpet, Large Chime in A, Harp and String
Orchestra; The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Elgar
Howarth, trumpet; Arthur Bennett Lipkin, conductor

Triptych:

14. Ave Maria, Op. 100/1a (1952) (2:46)
15. Christmas Ode, Op. 100/1b (1952) (6:27)
16. Easter Cantata, Op 100/3 (1953) (13:00)
Benita Valente, soprano; Members of the Bamberg
Symphony, Bavarian Radio Singers, Alfredo
Antonini, conductor

Total Playing Time: 76:29

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Notes

A TRIBUTE TO OLIVER DANIEL (1911–1990)

All of the compositions on this disc have two things in common. One: they are all some of the first products of the yeasty infatuation that many American composers have felt for Eastern culture, and, two: they all exist, to some extent, because of the passionate advocacy of Oliver Daniel. An administrator, radio programmer, author and all-around advocate, he is one of the true unsung heroes of twentieth-century American music. It is fitting that his memory be honored by a disc from CRI—a record label he helped to create. Born in Wisconsin, in 1911, Oliver Daniel trained for a career as a concert pianist. He debuted in 1935 in Boston, to very encouraging reviews. After seven years of performing and teaching, however, Oliver gravitated towards his *real* calling

when he joined CBS Radio as music director of that network's Educational Division. For CBS, he produced and directed the weekly New York Philharmonic broadcasts, the concerts given by the CBS Symphony (amazing to recall, from today's perspective, an era when commercial networks sponsored their own orchestras!), and a pair of innovative programs (Invitation to Music and New Voices in Song) that showcased off-beat repertoire and promising young artists.

In 1944, Oliver was lured to the ABC Network, where he produced the broadcasts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He returned to CBS in 1947, and for the next eight years he labored prodigiously, becoming for that network's cultural programming what Edward R. Murrow was to the news division. Oliver produced not only symphonic concerts, but

also documentaries, interview programs, and public service broadcasts of all types.

It was during this enormously productive period that Oliver joined forces with another musical visionary, Leopold Stokowski, to inaugurate The Twentieth-Century Concert Hall, a program that gave valuable exposure to living composers of every stripe. Oliver's fierce dedication to contemporary music led him to become the coordinating manager of the American Composers Alliance (ACA), a co-founder (again with Stokowski) of the Contemporary Music Society, in 1954, a co-founder (with the composers Otto Luening and Douglas Moore) of Composers Recordings, Inc. (CRI). Somehow, he also found time to write eloquently about music for such leading magazines as *The Saturday Review*, *Stereo Review*, and *Musical America*.

The same year that CRI was launched, Oliver joined Broadcast Music, Incorporated (BMI) as the first director of its new Concert Music Department. Thanks to him, composers as diverse as Wallingford Riegger and William Schuman enjoyed an unprecedented level of support, promotion, and financial compensation. He was one of the founders of the American Symphony Orchestra (1962), and he served on the boards of the National Music Council, the American Symphony Orchestra League, and, beginning in 1959, was active in the affairs of UNESCO's International Music Council.

Perhaps Oliver's greatest single accomplishment was the world premiere, in 1965, of Charles Ives' Fourth Symphony, conducted by Stokowski. It was Oliver who first brought this masterpiece to the conductor's attention and who underwrote much of the expense required to bring it into the concert hall.

His final venture, before retirement, was to help organize the American Composers Orchestra—an enterprise still going strong at the dawn of the new millennium. Even in retirement, he made a great contribution. This was the first time the BSO had played any Hovhaness, despite the fact that the composer was devoting seven years to writing a monumental and definitive biography of Stokowski (*Stokowski: A Counterpoint of View*, Dodd Mead, 1982). At the time of his death, he was working on a similarly ambitious biography of Dimitri Mitropoulos.

Music is the poorer for his passing. The citation of his 1974 honorary doctorate from the New England Conservatory of Music states the matter plainly: "Oliver Daniel has rendered incalculable service to American composers of serious music..."

It is in great part thanks to him that the music on this disc was published, performed, and recorded.

Enjoy. Oliver would have wanted that.

Lou Harrison: *Suite for Violin, Piano, and Small Orchestra*

Born in Oregon, in 1917, Lou Harrison could be regarded as the quintessential Pacific Coast composer—one of the first American musicians to seriously explore the nature of Far Eastern musics. By immersing himself in the traditions of Balinese gamelan music, he created a unique sound-world characterized by graceful clarity, elegant simplicity, and colorful, often spicy, timbres.

The *Suite* was commissioned by the Ajemian sisters in 1951 and recorded by them shortly after Stokowski conducted it at the Museum of Modern Art, under the auspices of the Contemporary Music Society. The LP versions, RCA LM-1785 and CRI-114, have long been prized collectors' items. Oliver Daniel mid-wifed Stokowski's performance and

recording through his work with the American Composers Alliance.

The opening Allegro serves as a festive overture: the violin projects long, clean lines over the shimmering colors of the gamelan-style ensemble: piano, tack-piano, tam-tam, harp, celesta, and assorted gongs, in addition to the cello and double bass. The five succeeding movements alternate between tranquil, elegiac material and livelier sections, identified as "gamelans," which evoke the spirit and scintillating colors of the Indonesian styles that inspired the composer.

As Peggy Glanville-Hicks wrote in her notes for the RCA LP: "The Harrison *Suite* is one of the most delicate and lovely American works of recent years...the sheer grace and joyousness of its style...cannot fail to charm all who hear it."

Henry Cowell: *Homage to Iran*

If compositional devices could be copyrighted, Henry Cowell's heirs would be exceedingly rich. Long before they became fashionable elements in the contemporary composer's vocabulary, Cowell "invented" tone clusters, aleatoric techniques, altered pianos, harmonies based on seconds instead of traditional thirds, and the dramatic free-form string glissandi so beloved of Penderecki (among others). Cowell was composing and performing with such avant-garde innovations decades before anyone else.

For all his fierce experimentation, though, Cowell was basically a warm-hearted humanist, fully capable of writing music that was intensely melodic, heroic, charming, and even spiritual. Like the other composers on this disc, he was deeply interested in the music of other cultures, although he did not travel extensively until 1956, when a Rockefeller Foundation grant (bestowed largely through Oliver Daniel's efforts) allowed him to spend long periods of time in Turkey, Iran, India, and Japan.

Persian music especially fascinated Cowell. *Homage to Iran* (premiered in the Shah's palace on July 3, 1959) does not actually quote any ethnic material, but rather seeks to pay tribute to "the style and spirit" of Persian music. The work is cast in two pairs of movements, and its prismatic mood-changes range from chant-like incantations to dance-variations. Note particularly the brilliant toccata of the second movement.

At several key points in the score, Cowell wanted the pianist to lean over and mute the piano strings with his fingers, to imitate the timbre of a Persian drum. For this recording, however, violinist Leopold Avakian obtained the services of a real Persian drummer, a serendipity that delighted the composer.

Colin McPhee: *Nocturne*

This evocative work was commissioned by Oliver Daniel through the Contemporary Music Society and received its first performance (Stokowski conducting) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on December 2, 1958—on a program that also featured works by Egyptian, Chinese, Japanese, and Israeli composers!

Compact in form but lush in expression, the *Nocturne* constitutes a remembrance in distilled form of what the composer absorbed during his years of residence and study in Bali (1931–1939). It might also be thought of as a delightful pendant to McPhee's masterful symphonic piece *Tabuh-Tabuhan* (1936), a work generally acknowledged to be the finest product of his Balinese period. Only seven minutes long, the *Nocturne's* modal impressionism is musical exoticism of the most appealing kind.

Alan Hovhaness: *Koke No Niwa, The Holy City, and Triptych*

Today of course, Alan Hovhaness is one of the most beloved (and probably the most prolific) of American composers. In the early 1950s, however, he was still struggling for recognition. The 1955 world premiere of *Mysterious Mountain* (Stokowski and the Houston Symphony) certainly helped put Hovhaness's music on the cultural map, but even more important was a subsequent performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under guest conductor Robert Shaw. This was the first time the BSO had played any Hovhaness, despite the fact that the composer was born and raised in the Boston area. It was Oliver Daniel who brought the score to Shaw's attention.

Koke No Niwa:

"A garden of sounds and silences" is how the composer described this 1960 composition, written on commission from a Tokyo television station. Inspired by the fabled Koke Dera (Moss Temple) of Kyoto, this brief yet highly effective piece is delicately but tellingly scored for English horn, harp, and a veritable chamber orchestra of percussion (timpani, tam-tam, glockenspiel, and marimba).

The Holy City:

This piece is another example of Hovhaness's skill at creating a ceremonially powerful expression within very compact form. Commissioned by conductor Arthur Bennett Lipkin through the Committee to Further American Contemporary

Music, it manifests an otherworldly beauty: eerie glissandi from the richly-subdivided strings, over which the solo trumpet (masterfully played here by the great Elgar Howarth) projects a bittersweet meditation of cantorial eloquence.

Triptych:

Oliver Daniel was one of Hovhaness's earliest advocates. In 1952–53, he commissioned two parts of the *Triptych* (*Christmas Ode* and *Easter Cantata*) for CBS broadcasts on those two holidays. Although Hovhaness had already composed a great many works, this was his first commission resulting in immediate performance, and he considers the event to be a major milestone in his career.

Interestingly, the work became a "triptych" at Oliver's suggestion (with the addition of the *Ave Maria*), probably as a result of the warm response CBS enjoyed following a broadcast of the then-unknown *Botticelli Triptych* of Respighi.

The *Ave Maria* is scored for pairs of horns and oboes, harp, and women's chorus. It is a four-part motet in the ancient modal style so typical of Hovhaness's music from this period. *Christmas Ode* uses strings, celesta, and soprano voice in polymodal form, to create a mood the composer described as "celestial joyfulness." The *Easter Cantata*, though only thirteen minutes long, manages to depict both the sorrow of the Crucifixion and the ecstasy of the Resurrection. The cantata is dedicated to Oliver Daniel.

—William R. Trotter

Production Notes

Digitally remastered by Andreas Mayer, engineer at Sony Music Studios, NYC.

From CRI SD 114: *Suite* for Violin, Piano & Small Orchestra: Originally released on CRI August in 1957.

From CRI SD 173: *Homage*: Recorded May 4, 1960 at Steinway Hall, NYC. Engineered by Blake. Originally released on CRI in 1963.

From CRI SD 186: *Koke No Niwa*: Originally released in 1964.

From CRI SD 219: *Nocturne*: Originally released in 1968.

From CRI SD 259: *The Holy City*: Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded by Brian C. Snelling. This original recording was made possible by a grant from the U. S. Committee to Further American Contemporary Music. Originally released on CRI in 1970.

From CRI SD 221: *Ave Maria, Christmas Ode, Easter Cantata*: These original recordings (released 1968), were made possible by the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music.

Publishing: *Suite*: Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI); *Homage to Iran*: C. F. Peters (BMI); *Nocturne*: C. F. Peters (BMI), *Koke No Niwa, The Holy City*: C. F. Peters (BMI); *Ave Maria, Christmas Ode, Easter Cantata*: AMP (BMI).

Cover: pasted-paper cutout: Carl Malouf

Cover/Interior Design: Brenda Wolf

CRI Production Manager: Allison Wolf

America's premier new music label, Composers Recordings, Inc./CRI is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation, founded in 1954 and dedicated to the discovery, distribution and preservation of the finest in contemporary music representing the diverse inspirations of American culture. CRI's general operations and recorded projects are supported by a coalition of private foundations, universities and individuals.

Executive Director: Joseph R. Dalton

This compact disc has been made possible through the generous support of DONALD OTT and THE VIRGIL THOMSON FOUNDATION.