Ode to the Temple of Sound, Floating World-Ukiyo and Meditation on Zeami: An Analysis of Three Works by Alan Hovhaness

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ODE TO THE TEMPLE OF SOUND, FLOATING WORLD-UKIYO AND MEDITATION ON ZEAMI: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE WORKS BY ALAN HOVHANESS

By

Chung Park

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

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**ODE TO THE TEMPLE OF SOUND, FLOATING WORLD-UKIYO AND MEDITATION ON ZEAMI: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE WORKS BY ALAN HOVHANESS**

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This essay, through a thorough examination of primary and secondary sources, presents analyses of three orchestral works from Hovhaness’ ‘fourth-period’, a period of time spanning approximately ten years, from 1960 to 1970. This essay focuses on three works from this period: Meditation on Zeami, Floating World, and Ode to the Temple of Sound, written in 1963, 1964 and 1965, respectively.

This essay gathers information from various primary and secondary sources in order to provide performers who are preparing works from this period with a single source of information, bringing clarity to theoretical and musicological problems. Analyses of this sort are made all the more necessary by the fact that there are currently no extant recordings of any of the works being studied here, and that two of the works, Meditation on Zeami and Floating World, have never been commercially recorded. Without an aural precedent and guide to follow, analyses of these musics will be a welcome resource for the conductor preparing a performance.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

Alan Hovhaness was born in Somerville, Massachusetts on March 8, 1911 of Scottish and Armenian parentage. He died in Seattle, Washington on June 21, 2000. He started composing at an early age, developing an interest in meditation and mysticism at the same time. While his early, ‘first-period’ works were influenced by the music of the Renaissance and, in a strange juxtaposition, late Romanticism, seminal events in Hovhaness’ life would cause him to turn away from this style. Hovhaness used the interest in mysticism dating from his younger years and his exposure to Indian and other eastern musics as life-long influences on his musical output. These influences, coupled with an intense interest in the Armenian portion of his heritage and an insatiable appetite for exploring the music of other lands, provided further inspiration. Changes in Hovhaness’ musical style often correspond to important events in his life.

Frustrations, including criticism of his music suffered during his time as a fellow at the Tanglewood, then Berkshire, Music Center, and the meeting of influential mentors such as Herman DiGiovanno had a profound effect on the young composer. This meeting with DiGiovanno may have led Hovhaness to destroy almost his entire previous output from before World War II, a body of works totaling more than 1000 pieces. From this point on Hovhaness turned inward, toward his Armenian heritage and his beloved mysticism, studying the works of Armenian priest-composer Komitas Vardapet, and

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looking to Eastern music, particularly that of South India, the Tang Dynasty of China, the Ah-ok of Korea and the Gagaku of Japan, for inspiration. Almost all of Hovhaness’ works contain religious or mystical overtones, and the three works that are the focus of this essay, *Meditation on Zeami, Floating World, and Ode to the Temple of Sound*, are no exception.

In spite of his early disappointments, Hovhaness enjoyed great popularity shortly thereafter during the 1950’s, seeing works such as his *Mysterious Mountain* recorded by such august groups as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Fritz Reiner.¹ He traveled widely to hear his music performed and often found himself with more commissions than he could find time to adequately address. Hovhaness’ music is heard often today, with BMI royalty records revealing that several of Hovhaness’ compositions including early works, such as *Mysterious Mountain*, and slightly later works, such as *And God Created Great Whales* receive almost weekly performances. In spite of this seeming popularity, Hovhaness’ music lives on the periphery of the American Musical Canon.

### Rationale for the Study

Alan Hovhaness’ music was divided into four periods by Arnold Rosner for his Ph.D. dissertation entitled “An Analytical Survey of the Music of Alan Hovhaness.”² As Dr. Rosner’s dissertation was written in 1972, none of Hovhaness’ works after this date are discussed and through my research, nobody has attempted to categorize Hovhaness’

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later works in agreement with the means that Dr. Rosner used in his paper. For the purposes of this paper, which focuses on works written in the decade prior to the publication of Dr. Rosner’s paper, this division of Hovhaness’ works written up to 1972 provides a clear and ample means of delineating Hovhaness’ stylistic periods while providing an exceedingly useful timeline detailing Hovhaness’ musical evolution. It is important to note that certain aspects of Hovhaness’ music remained constant throughout his career, and he freely borrowed from one period while working in a later one. There are, however, notable stylistic contrasts that tend to correspond very closely with important events in Hovhaness’ life.

Dr. Rosner describes Hovhaness’ first period as being mostly of a religious nature, with Christian, Persian and Indian influences. Already this music was turning away from the west to some degree, but Hovhaness did use Baroque forms and early Baroque and Renaissance harmonies. The pre-World War II music that was destroyed came from this first period. Hovhaness’ second period is distinguished by a further turning away from a western musical language, this time towards the music of his ancestral homeland, Armenia. Hovhaness became the organist at an Armenian church during this time and the music he heard and performed during that time influenced him deeply. Hovhaness even began giving his music Armenian titles without ever achieving fluency with the language.3 This Armenian music is described as being of a triadic nature, but veers away from western music in its use of consecutive fifths, pentatonic

modes and non-diatonic scales.\textsuperscript{4} The third period music possesses qualities of both the first and second periods, albeit with richer sonorities and a much wider modal vocabulary. Diatonic, Armenian and major-minor modes as well as Indian Ragas are all present at various times, in contrast to the earlier periods, where one or two of these types might predominate. The fourth period music is distinguished by two developments. The first is the use of East Asian models and the second is a tendency towards darker emotions and sounds. The works that are the focus of this essay come from this fourth period and will be the subject of further study.

The erstwhile performer of Hovhaness’ fourth-period music faces three major groups of challenges. The first involves acquiring an understanding of the tonal style of this period. Hovhaness’ music from this period is built on modalities, mostly those from Asia, that are unfamiliar to Western ears, even with the desensitization of those Western ears caused by the global dissemination of unfamiliar and exotic musics taken into account. In addition, this unfamiliarity is compounded by the fact that Hovhaness often simply creates his own scales, somewhat in the tradition of the Indian Raga. The second issue is that of form. While Hovhaness shuns traditional Western forms in most works of this period, the pieces that are the focus of this essay use a modified version of a very simple ABA form that would be eminently familiar to Western listeners. At first hearing, these works may not seem to be ABA, but further study reveals that this is indeed the case. The third issue is made up of a set of performance practice issues. Hovhaness makes extensive use of non-traditional compositional devices, including extended

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 24.
techniques and large-scale aleatoric passages. This presents the performer with a host of technical, musical and rehearsal problems.

This essay, through a thorough examination of primary and secondary sources, presents analyses of three scores from Hovhaness’ fourth period. This provides conductors with a point of departure from which to base further study of this music spanning theoretical analysis to performance practice. Analyses of this sort are made all the more necessary by the fact that there are currently no extant recordings of any of the works being studied here, and that two of the works, *Meditation on Zeami* and *Floating World*, have never been commercially recorded. Without an aural precedent and guide to follow, analyses of these musics will be a welcome resource for the conductor preparing a performance.

**Objective of the Study**

The primary objective of this essay is to provide information for conductors who are preparing orchestral works from Hovhaness’ ‘fourth-period’, a period of time spanning approximately ten years, from 1960 to 1970. This essay focuses on three works from this period: *Meditation on Zeami*, *Floating World*, and *Ode to the Temple of Sound* written in 1963, 1964 and 1965, respectively. This essay gathers information from various primary and secondary sources in order to provide performers who are preparing works from this period with a single source of information, bringing clarity to theoretical and musicological problems. The essay also provides recommendations for further research and reading.
Explanation of the Process

The study commenced with a thorough examination of three scores from Hovhaness’ fourth-period: Meditation on Zeami, Floating World, and Ode to the Temple of Sound. This examination focused on the compositional techniques specific to this period of Hovhaness’ output. There is discussion of the influence that Hovhaness’ spiritual beliefs had on his work and how, or if, a knowledge of the representation of these beliefs in his music might affect the interpretation of his music.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Works

No publication has been encountered that presents thorough musical analyses of 

*Meditation on Zeami, Floating World, and Ode to the Temple of Sound.* The only 
published versions of these three works are readily available from the publisher, C.F. 
Peters of New York. The composer’s program notes for Floating World give the 
performer a very clear sense of the sound world he is looking for:

Floating World is an old Japanese Buddhist concept of uncertainty, 
change, undependability, insubstantial qualities of the world, the only joy 
being the hope of salvation in the next world. However, a new concept 
was superimposed during the prosperity of the 17th century when the 
transitory world became associated with ideas of pleasure, delight and adventure. These two ideas became united. This music is an abstraction 
of these thoughts, inspired by the genius of the great Japanese playwright 
Chikamatsu.

The music grows out of one dramatic theme. The orchestra plays wild 
whirlpools or sounds in free rhythms over which fragments of the 
dramatic theme are sounded. Free rhythms are heard in mysterious and 
clangoring bells, in sliding melodies in the woodwinds, and in delicate and 
tornado-like sounds. A middle section, in the form of a ghost march, 
begins very softly in the percussion alone. There is a gradual crescendo, 
like the mysterious procession of past civilizations and heroes, breaking 
off in a cry. A wild free-rhythm sound shakes the whole orchestra. The 
main theme is sounded in bells and brass with utmost intensity, a prayer of 
supplication for salvation. The music ends in a whirlwind crescendo of 
wild sounds of controlled chaos.

The melodies are entirely original and are not folk melodies, but they 
create a spirit of a folk ballad. The melodic line is created from a 
vocabulary of sounds, sliding tones and shaking tones.  

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The other two works, Zeami and Ode, while missing the program notes, are very similar in content and style, and performers preparing these works could very readily apply the spirit of the notes for Floating World to these other pieces.

Recordings

There are no currently available commercial recordings of any of the three works that are the focus of this essay. The only work from this set of three that has received a commercial recording is Ode to the Temple of Sound, recorded by Andre Kostelanetz and his Orchestra in 1966.6 This recording received wide currency and is thus available in many music libraries, but it unfortunately contains a sizeable cut that compromises the integrity of the work’s architecture. In addition, this recording has never been released on compact disc or other digital medium, making further dissemination unlikely. Hovhaness aficionados often record radio broadcasts of live performances of his music, and it is through this medium that this author has been fortunate enough to procure recordings to listen to. Marco Shirodkar’s website hovhaness.com7 serves as a sort of clearinghouse for lovers of Hovhaness’ music. People send in recordings made from radio broadcasts or other performances from all over the globe, and Mr. Shirodkar has generously made several of these recordings available to me for perusal.


Recorded Interviews and Lectures

The two most valuable sources of information for this essay are wide-ranging interviews of Alan Hovhaness with Richard Howard,\(^8\) recorded in 1983 at his home in Seattle, and Walter Simmons,\(^9\) recorded in 1971 for the BBC. A third recorded source is a fascinating lecture recorded in February 1967 at Elmira College in New York State, where Hovhaness discusses his works and participates in performances by that schools’ ensembles. This direct oral transmission of his working methods gives the performer great insight into Hovhaness’ work, covering every aspect of his working methods from inspiration, on to exertion, to the final product.\(^{10}\)

Body of Literature

There are several sources discussing issues that relate to Hovhaness’ music. The body of available literature is both wide-ranging and detailed, covering Hovhaness’ life, music, style, aesthetics, spiritual practices, education, ethnomusicological studies, form and tonality. Most of the more detailed sources are found in musicology journals, whereas the few sources devoted to an in-depth study of Hovhaness’ tonal language were done as doctoral essays or dissertations.

The first of five doctoral essays I have examined is by Juang Wen-Ta, entitled “Formosa Symphony: An Original Work Incorporating Taiwanese Folk-Song Materials

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\(^{10}\) Alan Hovhaness, "Giant Melody in Nature and Art", to Elmira College, 14 February 1967, Elmira, NY.
and an Analysis of Symphony No. 50 by Alan Hovhaness.”11 The author examines the principal compositional features of the *Formosa Symphony*, including Hovhaness’ incorporation of traditional Taiwanese folk music and the manner in which Hovhaness blends these specifically Taiwanese ideas into a Western musical form. The author also explores Hovhaness’ spiritual experiences and the manner in which the work was “inspired by the Eastern religious philosophy of abandoning ego and self in the attempt to reach a cosmic and universal oneness with God.”12 Additionally, the author examines in more general ways the influence of Eastern modality, ah-ok music of Korea, seventeenth-century Armenian religious music, classical music of South India, orchestra music of the Chinese Tang dynasty, gagaku of Japan, and the opera and oratorios of Handel.

The second essay I have chosen is by Phillip Eugene Young, D.M.A., entitled “An Analysis of Symphony No. 19 ("Vishnu") by Alan Hovhaness, and "Kshetrajna", An Original Composition for Orchestra” for the Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College.13 This dissertation consists of two parts: Part I is an analysis of Hovhaness’ Symphony No. 19 (Vishnu), and Part II is an original composition in three movements for orchestra entitled Kshetrajna. It is the first part of Dr. Young’s work that is of interest for this essay as there are many similarities between the Symphony No. 19 and the works that are the focus of this author’s essay. The author examines the mystical aspects of the work and provides an analysis of “the various parameters of form, tonality

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12 Ibid, 7.

and modality, ‘senza misura’ practices, melody and vertical sonority found in Hovhaness’ 19th symphony.”¹⁴

The third paper is by Katherine Hay, Ed.D, entitled “East Asian Influence on the composition and performance of Contemporary Flute Music,”¹⁵ for the Columbia University Teachers College. This study is concerned with demonstrating an influence of Chinese and Japanese music on contemporary flute music as part of an historical continuum that began with the earliest overseas exploration of the East. The author examines the influence of Eastern art as well as music on the flute repertoire, as well as examining the technical and musical aspects of several composers including Alan Hovhaness. This article is of particular relevance to this author’s essay as it provides analysis coupled with suggestions for performance and interpreting performance practice.

One of the most complete essays dedicated to the music of Alan Hovhaness is “An Analytical Survey of the Music of Alan Hovhaness” by Arnold Rosner for the State University of New York at Buffalo.¹⁶ Written in 1972, it does leave out a significant portion of the composer’s output. Mr. Rosner’s essay does, however, cover the period of Hovhaness’ output that will be covered in the current essay.

There are no biographical books dedicated solely to the life and works of Alan Hovhaness, but he is examined in several compendia devoted to American composers, including “An Introduction to America's Music”¹⁷ by Richard Crawford and “Our

¹⁴Ibid, 1.


American music; a comprehensive history from 1620 to the present,”18 edited by John Howard Tasker. He is also featured in “Soundpieces 2: Interviews with American Composers”19 by Cole Gagne and “Music of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde: A Biocritical Sourcebook,”20 edited by Larry Sitsky.

There are two articles from scholarly journals that are of particular relevance to the subject matter of this essay. They are: “The East in the West,”21 by John Cage, written for the journal Asian Music and “The Transcendental Contemporary: A Profile of Alan Hovhaness”22 by Richard Kostelanetz from the Michigan Quarterly Review. These articles provide in-depth discussions of the music of Hovhaness, with Mr. Cage’s article leaning more towards the theoretical and Mr. Kostelanetz’s towards the biographical.


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Summary

In reviewing the extant literature on Alan Hovhaness, there seems to be a large number of works presenting general information on the work and life of Hovhaness and the preparation of his works for performance by solo instruments. At this time, however, there is no source dedicated to the successful preparation for performance of his orchestral works in the style of Norman del Mar’s “On the Beethoven Symphonies,” which gives detailed instructions on all manner of issues relevant to successful execution in the concert hall. That is the subject matter upon which this essay is focused.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The primary purpose of this essay is to provide information for performers who are preparing orchestral works from Alan Hovhaness’ “fourth-period,” a period of time spanning approximately ten years, from 1960 to 1970. This essay focuses on three works from this period: Meditation on Zeami, Floating World, and Ode to the Temple of Sound, written in 1963, 1964 and 1965, respectively. The essay also provides recommendations for further research and reading.

While several sources exist on the compositional style and techniques of Alan Hovhaness, there are no useful analyses to help a performer prepare his orchestral works from the fourth period for performance. The production of these analyses was accomplished by first gathering literature sources from various primary and secondary sources for each aspect of the topic. These aspects include an understanding of the tonal style, formal structure, and performance practice issues.

I begin this essay with an historical overview of Hovhaness’ music and include a brief discussion of his music from other periods to provide context. This is followed by an examination of the scales that Hovhaness uses, both pre-existing and those invented by the composer. There will be a discussion of the role that his exposure to exoticism at the New England Conservatory played, as well as the role that his interest in Eastern mysticism played. Following this is an examination of the formal and orchestration aspects of Hovhaness’ music from this period. I begin with a general overview of his
formal style, continue with a discussion detailing the formal significance, function and orchestration of the aleatoric sections, and close with a general discussion of orchestration in these three works.

Following this is a detailed discussion of the manner in which Hovhaness has organized *Meditation on Zeami*, *Floating World*, and *Ode to the Temple of Sound*, with a review of similarities and differences between these works. There will also be a discussion of the peculiarities of his use of the orchestra during aleatoric sections of these pieces.

The next section of my paper is devoted to performance practice issues and problems that performers of this music may encounter when performing these works. This includes a discussion regarding the faithful execution of the extended techniques called for by Hovhaness in these scores. I follow this with my recommendations for the successful execution of the aleatoric sections in these pieces, including an examination of any technical difficulties the conductor may encounter when conducting and rehearsing these sections. This section also includes a table that provides a sample list of passages that require extended techniques, along with recommended reading from the literature that address the successful execution of these passages. Following this, I provide my conclusions and offer recommendations for further research and reading.
CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND TONAL STYLE OF THE FOURTH PERIOD

Hovhaness arrived at his fourth period via a circuitous path that stretches from Boston to Armenia to India arriving finally in the east. Hovhaness’ interest in eastern thought and music started at a very early age, and one senses that this very earnest young boy felt a strong connection to the music of his father’s ancestral homeland, Armenia, that verges on the mystical. As a young boy of four, Hovhaness invented a system of notation with an eleven line staff (he later found that this system was similar to an archaic form of Armenian vocal notation, about which there is more below), writing an organ piece using this system, which his mother refused to play on the small harmonium the Hovhaness family kept at home. Deterred by this insult from writing music again until he was seven, Hovhaness took up composing again at that age using the standard five line notation by day, but continued to follow his heart by night. “At that time I composed on regular staff notation, but at night when I was supposed to sleep I made another notation which I could see in the dark.”

Unfortunately there are no details as to how he accomplished this. “This system of writing music without being able to see it resembled a vocal Armenian notation of around the 1820 period which I learned later.”

This type of mystical connection Hovhaness felt to his ancestral homeland fueled a search for something that Hovhaness was not able to find in his leafy suburb outside of

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27 Ibid.
Boston. An early interest in meditation was just a harbinger of things to come.

Hovhaness became interested in the music of Komitas Vardapet, an Armenian composer-priest who went insane after the Turkish massacre of Armenians in 1917 and died in a Paris asylum in 1936. Hovhaness dove deeply into learning what he could about Armenia, eventually mastering the Armenian language and developing a fluency with Armenia’s music. This interest in the music and culture of Armenia led in turn to an interest in the music and cultures of other countries. Hovhaness slowly worked his way eastward, writing *Layla* for voice and piano, based on a Persian text.

The eastward shift continued when Hovhaness heard a performance in Boston sometime in the early 1940’s by Uday Shankar and his company of musicians and dancers. This performance opened up a whole new world of tonality to Hovhaness that would have both immediate and long lasting affects. The ragas, or Indian scales, that Hovhaness heard that night influenced him mightily, and he incorporated the spirit of these scales, with their constantly changing notes, into much of his music afterwards. Even the music of the fourth period, which is mostly influenced by the music of Japan, China and Korea, uses some of these raga-like scales, especially in the free-floating aleatoric sections.

While there are many competing theories as to why Hovhaness destroyed most of what he had written before 1940, it is plausible to believe that Hovhaness’ eastward turn may have, to some degree, caused him to become dissatisfied with the music he had written up to that time. After this time, Hovhaness experienced a sort of rebirth, combining elements of the west and east in earnest in his writing. While Hovhaness retained many of the formal structures prevalent in western music, writing symphonies
and concertos, for instance, he infuses these works with eastern characteristics, reproducing the sound of eastern instruments on western instruments and adopting eastern modes and scales.

Hovhaness eventually found himself in the lands that had fascinated him for so long, traveling to India and Japan on a Fulbright scholarship in 1959. Wherever he went, Hovhaness immediately set upon learning all that he could about the music and instruments of the country he was in. He was a true musical polyglot, even going so far as to devote himself to learning how to play several eastern instruments, some quite well.

In India, Hovhaness started writing for the actual instruments of that country rather than reproducing their sound on western instruments. For example, Hovhaness’ work *Nagooran*, commissioned by All-India Radio, uses only South Indian instruments. As he made his way to Japan, Hovhaness continued to mix the musical styles of the east and west in pieces such as *Koke No Niwa* for English horn, percussion and harp, and his cantata *Fuji* for women’s choir and chamber ensemble. These works were performed to great and widespread acclaim, and Hovhaness became a celebrity, appearing on television, receiving invitations to conduct the Tokyo Symphony in concerts of his works and receiving several commissions.

Hovhaness returned to the East again for an extended visit in 1962, initially only as far as Hawaii, but this was somehow appropriate, as the melding of east and west was in evidence there as perhaps nowhere else. Hovhaness wrote *Wind Drum*, which uses Indian scales, on a commission from the east-west center in Hawaii. This music combines the scales of India with the instrumental sounds of the far east and is played on western instruments.
It is at this point in Hovhaness’ career that we reach his fourth period. As was stated in the first chapter, Hovhaness’ first period encompasses those works, mostly from before 1940, destroyed by Hovhaness after he turned away from that style. Hovhaness’ second period covers his overtly Armenian works and the third period is a conglomeration of Armenian as well as Indian influences. We arrive here, in 1962, with Hovhaness having made several trips to the east already, on a most important and seminal trip, one that helped to define the characteristics that set his fourth period distinctly apart from the preceding three.

Later in 1962, Hovhaness received a Rockefeller grant to study the ancient court musics of Japan, *gagaku*, and Korea, *ah-ok*. It was at some time during this trip that Hovhaness also made his way to China. Inspired by the natural beauty of the Korean landscape and his positive interaction with the people of Korea, Hovhaness wrote several pieces that attempted to capture “the beauty of Korean mountains, the sublimity of Korean traditional music and the wisdom and nobility of Korean people,”28 including his Symphony no. 16 for Strings and Korean Instruments. While in Korea, Japan and China, Hovhaness studied and became proficient in all manner of indigenous instruments. Hovhaness reproduces the splendor and majesty of what he heard while he was in east Asia in the works of this period, including the three that are the focus of this essay, to great effect.

Hovhaness reaches a sort of musical plateau or vista at this point, looking down upon what he has learned, using all of the influences that he has been exposed to and writing music that almost defies categorization. He mixes and matches cultures and techniques almost at will. While the music of Korea and Japan are the foremost

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28 Ibid, 341.
influences on the music of this period, China and Tibet are also represented, with Hovhaness reproducing the sound of the Chinese mouth organ or *sho* in *Meditation on Zeami*, named after the founder of Japanese Noh Drama. In addition, Hovhaness was inspired by the piercing sound of the Tibetan oboe to write several passages in works of this period, and the clangorous sound of oriental percussion instruments is also well represented. Not to be forgotten is the influence of the Indian Raga, the Indian scales with quasi-improvisational characteristics. Hovhaness drew inspiration from these scales and proceeded to invent his own, further cementing the uniqueness of his musical language.

Hovhaness’ fourth period is characterized most of all by the catholic nature of his musical influences. Hovhaness manages to incorporate all of the musics by which he has been influenced into his music from the fourth period while retaining and conveying an overarching sense of the important influence of Asian court musics that held sway over his creative activity during this time.

Discussion of the Tonal Style of Hovhaness’ Fourth-period

Ever the iconoclast, Alan Hovhaness shunned the twelve-tone system invented by Arnold Schoenberg and remained devoted to tonality. As is related to the reader in *American Composers: A Biographical Dictionary*, Hovhaness once said:

> To me, atonality is against nature. There is a center to everything that exists. The planets have the sun, the moon and the earth. The reason I like oriental music is that everything has a firm center. All music with a center is tonal. Music without a center is fine for a minute or two, but it soon sounds all the same.
Things which are very complicated tend to disappear and get lost. Simplicity is difficult, not easy. Beauty is simple. All unnecessary elements are removed – only essence remains.\textsuperscript{29}

The three works that are the focus of this essay are deeply imbued with the spirit that Hovhaness describes in this quotation. While the aleatoric sections present on all of these works may sound atonal or completely chaotic upon first hearing, they are in fact firmly rooted in a tonal structure.

The tonal structure that Hovhaness adheres to is not necessarily the tonal structure we are accustomed to from western composers; they are instead almost exclusively modal. Here again Hovhaness bucks tradition by using western church modes and eastern pentatonic modes, combining the two into modes of his own devising. These modes are less diatonic than the ones Hovhaness uses during the preceding three periods, with Japanese and Indian modes making their influence felt. In addition, Hovhaness often restricts himself to using very few tones, sometimes composing entire works using a very strict set of tones (perhaps a nod in some manner to the Schoenbergian school) and often writing large sections of pieces in this manner.

Eastern art and aesthetic thinking, with its emphasis on the beauty of the individual event, does not lend itself well to musical treatment in the traditional western manner. The drive to go from tonic to dominant and return to the tonic is incongruous to the somewhat static nature of eastern art, where one simply enjoys the present moment without attachment and moves on to the next one. That said, Hovhaness does not shun his western roots entirely during the fourth period. Pitches are definite, with no use of quarter or microtones - as is present in some western representations of eastern music. Melodies do have a sense of movement, but this is achieved through repetition rather than

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, 342.
development. Harmonies are clear but often not western, without the sense of resolution that western ears are accustomed to through dominant to tonic resolution.

One obvious byproduct of this avoidance of western harmonic motion is a lack of key changes. There are transpositions of the music to relative keys, to be sure, but these are often momentary, and not meant to bring about modulation. This is similar to the manner in which Russian composers, such as Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin, faced with the challenge of setting their modal folk music to lengthy formal structures, created a sense of melodic and harmonic motion and movement. In Hovhaness’ music, however, there is even less of a sense of striving towards a goal, and harmonic movements are there simply for their own inherent beauty rather than as an achievement to be reached.

Another important aspect of Hovhaness’ style is his use of chordal pedal points. In yet another departure from western music, the upper voices often provide the harmony, reversing the roles as we in the west traditionally think of them. This does not mean that the melodies are relegated to the lower voices, simply that the upper voices often carry the harmonic burden. In situations where this is the case, different “choirs” in the orchestra play the melodies. As an example, if the violins are engaged in playing a chordal pedal, the brass will play the melody, with no regard as to register.

Examination of Eastern Exotic, Raga-Like Scales

Eminent American composer and theorist John Cage describes Hovhaness’ scalar language in the following way:

Unlike the Schoenbergian, the music of Alan Hovhaness, young composer of Scottish-Armenian descent, is a conscious fusion of Orient and Occident. Hovhaness diverges both from the Orient and the Occident, and he does this at his own discretion. To the degree that he follows his own
ideas in matters of theory, he is Occidental. His music sounds Armenian, but this impression is due largely to our general unfamiliarity with Oriental music. For Hovhaness’ music is by no means the faithful transcription, for instance, that McPhee’s is; it is the evidence purely of its composer’s imagination. Freely invented ragas are used which may change in the upper octaves and which may ascend in one way and descend in another. For purposes of expressivity, he allows a change of one or more tones (generally only one) after the raga has been established. Furthermore he allows a change of raga altogether, with or without a return to the original one, if the expression so demands. He also combines different ragas by letting them appear simultaneously between voices. The use of raga is Oriental; the idea of changing its tones, or letting others appear either at the same time or later is characteristic or Occidental musical thought. The absence of harmony in Hovhaness’ music is Eastern. The fact that his compositions are notated and may be played more than once is Western.30

Cage’s thoughts on Hovhaness are pithy, insightful and elegantly stated. He manages to distill the entirety of Hovhaness’ musical development into one short paragraph, showing the reader with no uncertainty what makes Hovhaness, Hovhaness. He is able at once to separate the influence of west and east in Hovhaness’ music while showing us how Hovhaness combines the two. The most striking and important point that Cage makes is that Hovhaness is utterly original, that “it (Hovhaness’ music) is the evidence purely of its composer’s imagination.”31 This is a most important point for any erstwhile performer of Hovhaness’ music.

Performers looking for a neat and readily usable set of theoretical guidelines by which to analyze Hovhaness’ music will meet with frustration. Hovhaness uses the musical systems of both the east and the west as points of departure from which he arrives at his own musical goals. That is not to say that he gives these systems a cursory nod and discards them. In fact, he is able to capture the spirit of the music of the east in a


31 Ibid.
way that many a more learned or scholarly composer has been unable to do. At the same time, he gives the western listener just enough formal structure to hang these exotic harmonies, scales and melodies upon. It is in this way that Hovhaness blends east and west, not by taking the “best of both worlds” and combining the two, but by choosing what speaks to him personally, spiritually and musically and producing something that is purely Hovhaness.
CHAPTER 5
FORM AND ORCHESTRATION

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Hovhaness does not use the formal structures that are prevalent in Austro-Germanic music from Mozart to Mahler. In fact, he uses anything but these forms. Even when he titles a work *symphony*, he eschews the conventional sonata or rondo forms for forms of his own invention or for forms that follow other stylistic guidelines. In other words, one is not likely to find the motivic development that one sees in Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* or the tonal and formal architecture that usually accompanies these techniques. Instead, Hovhaness finds inspiration in the outer fringes of music, drawing from the baroque, jazz and Asia. One often finds fugues and canons that are reminiscent of the texture of baroque works, and the middle section of *Ode to the Temple of Sound* is one such example. Similarly, Hovhaness uses simple repetition and variation to form large sections of his works, and the three works which are the subject of this essay are no exception.

The three pieces which are the focus of this essay, *Ode to the Temple of Sound*, *Floating World*, and *Meditation on Zeami*, and may henceforth be referred to as *Ode*, *Floating* and *Zeami*, share many important characteristics. This is especially true of the formal aspect of this music. As he describes it in his interview with Richard Howard, the formal structure in broad terms consists of an introduction, followed by a *surprise*

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vision, introduced by aleatoric writing and serving as a transition to a B section, while closing with a hymn of praise. Hovhaness describes this form another way when speaking of the Overture to Avak the Healer. He describes the form of this overture as more specifically as “supplication, surprise, and final fulfillment or glorification.” Though Avak was written almost two decades before the works we are discussing, the formal aspect of this work aptly describes all three of the works discussed here, which are built from these same building blocks. Hovhaness treats the “introduction, surprise vision and hymn of praise” form similarly in Ode to the Temple of Sound and Floating World. Both of these works contain an easily discernible return to an A theme, while Meditation on Zeami, is slightly different in that the return to an A theme is more subtle, though the basic form applies to this work, as well.

I will continue this section with a discussion of the formal importance of the chance music or aleatoric sections that make up large sections of all three of these pieces. Following that, I will describe the formal characteristics of each of these pieces separately while including a discussion of their similarities and differences, as well.

Formal Significance, Function and Orchestration of the Aleatoric Sections

An important thread that binds the pieces which are the focus of this essay together is that constituted by the aleatoric, or chance music sections. A brief explanation of the function, and genesis of these aleatoric sections as related by Hovhaness himself to Richard Howard during an interview at Hovhaness’ Seattle home in 1983 is very useful here.

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33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
Hovhaness came upon the technique of writing aleatoric music after his friend and mentor, Herman diGiovanno, related to him a vision that came in a dream. diGiovanno described a strange murmuring effect, which Hovhaness tried to recreate in music notation, calling the result *spirit murmur*. It was ridiculed at first by the professional musicians who played it, but it soon won greater acceptance. Aleatoric music is, of course, now commonplace. Hovhaness himself describes the effect of some of this writing as a *cloud* or *carpet* of sound, and downplays the significance of these sections, insisting that they are there simply as texture. Indeed, many of these *cloud* sections are transitional in nature. However, Hovhaness uses the technique enough that it becomes a compositional device and becomes the first of three ways that Hovhaness uses aleatoric writing technique consistently. Hovhaness says that he has rebuffed suggestions that he write an entire work that is aleatoric, saying that that he doesn’t want this technique “to take over,” while agreeing with Mr. Howard’s assertion that the aleatoric technique is always used within a framework. It is not clear exactly what type of framework Mr. Howard is talking about, be it tonal, formal or even textural, but it is clear that Hovhaness saw these aleatoric sections as secondary in importance to the non-aleatoric music.

That stated, the aleatoric sections are hugely important as structural pillars in all three of these works. The sheer sonic force of many of these aleatoric sections speaks to a greater importance. This writer found that several of these loud examples, such as the section that goes from rehearsal number six to seven in *Ode*,

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35 Ibid.

Fig. 1: Ode to the Temple of Sound, “Great Crescendo”, Rehearsal 6-7
and that I will refer to from here forward as *great crescendo* measures, acts as a musical palate cleanser, serving to erase the previous section from the listener’s mind, while preparing one for the next section to come. These *great crescendo* measures also announce the beginning of the *surprise* section of the work. These *surprise* sections are very important to the one’s grasp of the overall formal structure, as they are the transitions to the B section of all of these works. This is the second of the three uses of aleatoric writing.

The third primary way Hovhaness uses aleatoric writing is as an opportunity to introduce new thematic material, which is often developed during these sections, or later on in the work in a composed section. Hovhaness’ use of thematic material in aleatoric sections of *Ode* differs greatly from *Zeami* and *Floating*. Hovhaness introduces a haunting theme in the solo flute at rehearsal number four:37

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Fig. 2: Ode to the Temple of Sound, Flute Solo, Rehearsal 4
and again at rehearsal seven, where it is taken up by the entire flute section.\textsuperscript{38} These are the only times this theme appears in this work. This is in stark contrast to \textit{Floating World} and \textit{Meditation on Zeami}, where Hovhaness uses themes introduced in the aleatoric sections throughout the work. Additionally, these themes are often passed between different instruments in the orchestra, as is the case with the following section from \textit{Floating World}.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

This passing of the theme between sections of the orchestra is a central characteristic of Hovhaness’ method of development, and indicative of the fact that these aleatoric sections are the cradle for much of the developmental writing in these works. In *Floating*
World, Hovhaness uses a theme played by the ‘cellos during an aleatoric passage in the beginning of the piece to great effect at the climax of the piece, where the full brass choir takes it up. Lastly, all of the pieces end with aleatoric music, further confirmation of the importance of this technique as a structural device.

From an orchestrational standpoint, the three types of aleatoric writing each possess their own distinctive qualities. The cloud effect writing usually involves percussion or harp to provide a murmuring sound. The great crescendo bars rely upon the brass and percussion sections to provide tremendous power, and the aleatoric sections that are developmental or thematic in nature generally overlay thematic material with the murmuring effect of the cloud sections, as we saw in the previous example from Floating.

General Discussion of Orchestration

Alan Hovhaness is very consistent in his choice of instrumentation. There are few deviations from what was, during the time he wrote this music, a very standard orchestra. Woodwinds are usually called for in sets of two or three, with the occasional English Horn to augment the oboe section. Hovhaness uses so-called auxiliary instruments, such as bass clarinet and contrabassoon sparingly, if at all. The brass choir is also quite standard, with four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba. Percussion requirements are the most extensive, with Hovhaness scoring for all manner of instruments including, but not limited to vibraphone, chimes, glockenspiel, in addition to the usual bass drum, timpani and other instruments. Several of the percussion parts in
Ode\textsuperscript{40} and Floating\textsuperscript{41} are marked \textit{ad libitum}, and are to be used at the discretion of the performer. It is reasonable to expect that not all of these instruments or the personnel to play them will be readily available to every orchestra, especially the youth orchestras for which these works are especially appropriate. Both Ode and Zeami call for harp, with Ode also requiring a celesta for the \textit{cloud} effect sections.

While Hovhaness may not be an orchestral colorist cast in the mold of Maurice Ravel or Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, he does have a distinctive orchestrational voice. His extensive doubling of melodies, especially when they are in the lower instruments or even in the low range of higher instruments, creates a thick timbre that can almost be described as homophonic. For Floating and Zeami, which are extremely dark in musical character, this quasi-homophonic writing lends the \textit{hymn of praise} passages a particularly sinister cast when the entire brass section is playing in unison.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} Alan Hovhaness, \textit{Ode to the Temple of Sound}, New York: C.F. Peters, 1965.

\textsuperscript{41} Alan Hovhaness, \textit{Floating World-Ukiyo}, C.F. Peters, New York, NY.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 46.
Fig. 4: Floating World, Quasi Homophonic Writing
This extensive doubling of melodies is characteristic of Hovhaness’ music throughout this period with one unexpected benefit: this homophonic quality combined with his writing for most instruments in comfortable ranges, relatively simple key signatures and rhythms make these works an excellent choice for young orchestras.

The last orchestrational technique of Hovhaness discussed here is the way he mimics the effect of the Japanese mouth organ, or sho. The sho was an instrument with several reeds that produced chords at close intervals. Hovhaness reproduces this to great effect in the modern orchestra, most often in divisi violins. The main chords are interrupted by chords that are touched and released relatively quickly by still more divisi violins or occasionally violas, in an effect that Hovhaness describes during a lecture on his music at Elmira College as the dragonfly effect. The following is an example of this from Ode.44


Fig. 5: Ode to the Temple of Sound, Dragonfly Effect
Hovhaness imitates the sho liberally throughout all of these works, but the *dragonfly effect* does not always coincide with these *sho*-like sections. While Hovhaness uses this technique earlier in *Ode*, this is the most obvious example. Another interesting aspect of this compositional device is that it often places the harmony in a tessitura at or even above that of the melody as discussed in chapter four of this essay. One also sees this earlier on in the piece such as at rehearsal twenty-two, where the upper strings play the role of the sho.\(^45\)

\(^{45}\) Ibid, 27.
Fig. 6: Ode to the Temple of Sound, Violins and Violas Imitating Sho
Formal and Orchestral Analysis of
*Ode to the Temple of Sound*

*Ode to the Temple of Sound* is, in most ways, the most conventional of the three works we are discussing. Even though it is heavily influenced by Asian music, as one can hear from Hovhaness’ reliance on pentatonic scales, the harmonies do not sound excessively foreign to western ears. In addition, resolutions by intervals of fourths and fifths give the listener the impression of traditional western cadences. It is also the most western from a formal point of view, with an opening section that we can label as an “A” section, followed by a large aleatoric section that serves as a transition to the central, or “B” section, whereupon the opening theme returns, slightly changed, in the closing, or “A¹” section. The “introduction, surprise vision and hymn of praise” structure discussed above is very clearly laid out in this work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. <em>Ode to the Temple of Sound</em> Formal Structure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A section</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning to end of rehearsal seven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages two to eleven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of measures in section: thirty-five.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hovhaness uses aleatoric passages sparingly in this work, using them to connect the A section to the B section and to end the work. His use of aleatoric music at the end of the work is unique amongst these three pieces, as Hovhaness combines aleatoric writing with composed music. This commingling of techniques serves to unify the work at its ultimate point. If one were to consider the aleatoric writing to be oriental in nature,
with the composed music being occidental, this commingling seems to be thoroughly appropriate to a work that strives to meld the two cultures throughout the piece.

The A and A¹ sections in this work are compact in comparison to the sprawling middle section. The A section opens with a brief four measure introduction, whereupon the A theme is introduced in the brass and percussion sections.⁴⁶ The A theme returns in a slightly lengthened version once again, and is followed by a three bar transition to the first aleatoric section.

Hovhaness strives for a sense of calm through his orchestration in this opening section. He uses the _cloud_ effect in the harp and celesta to create an ethereal backdrop over which he places a gently arching melody in the brass and percussion. Hovhaness writes these melodies in the middle of the range for these instruments, as he also does slightly later on for the woodwind interludes. The gentle ease with which these melodies can be played combined with the _cloud_ effect lends a sweetly languid quality to this introduction. The upper strings take on their usual role of mimicking the _sho_, and even though harmonies are often separated by intervals of a second, there is little sense of agitation resulting from these dissonances. The woodwinds signal the end of this idyll with three signal calls, using the dragonfly effect to mark the end of the introduction.

The first bar of the aleatoric section that follows the introduction bears some discussion. Hovhaness has the orchestra make “one great crescendo”⁴⁷ in this bar, obliterating the previous music while it notifies the listener that something new is to follow, thus serving as a means of transition. This is the palate cleansing effect that was

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⁴⁶ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 7.
mentioned earlier, and is evocative of music that Hovhaness may have heard while visiting Buddhist temples during his trips to Asia. In this piece as in the others we are examining, it is also the music that serves as the “surprise” moment. In Buddhist religious activities, percussive sounds are often used to clear and focus the mind while delineating the different sections of the service, which is the means by which I chose to interpret these sections during our performances.

After the mind has been cleared of thoughts, Hovhaness introduces the previously mentioned new theme in the solo flute, followed by another aleatoric bar with all three flutes playing in canon to close this aleatoric section. This use of canonic writing is apparently lifted directly from temple music Hovhaness heard while traveling in Asia, and it appears throughout the aleatoric sections in these three works. The cloud effect is created by harp and celeste here. Hovhaness does call for a second harp in *Ode*, but this part is marked *ad libitum*.

Following this aleatoric section is the B section. It is by far the largest section of the work, stretching for 142 measures in 4/4 time. By comparison, the A and A¹ sections combined are sixty-six bars in length, and that is only if you count the sixteen bar coda-like passage that spans from rehearsal twenty-four to the end as part of A¹.

The compositional premise that drives this section is simple. Hovhaness introduces a pentatonic theme with an oriental character in the first violins, then treats this theme in canon, handing it off between sections until the climax of the section, which begins at the third bar of rehearsal number twenty-eight. Here Hovhaness creates a striking effect by tightening the canon to one quarter-note beat between statements, as

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opposed to the three to four measure separation he uses previously in this section. As Hovhaness starts this canon at the top of the orchestra tessitura in the piccolo and ends it at the very bottom in the double basses, it creates an electrifying cascade-like effect. He follows this with a four bar transition which begins four bars before rehearsal twenty-two. The brass and percussion theme from the A section returns here in augmentation in the glockenspiel, chimes and vibraphone, leading us to A¹, which is the hymn of praise section.

There is nothing particularly noteworthy about the orchestration in the B section. Hovhaness pairs instruments together in very traditional ways, with flutes and oboes doubling violins, bassoons doubling ‘celli and so forth. Yet it is the very simplicity of this treatment that makes the cascade of the canon theme beginning at the third bar of rehearsal twenty so glorious and the augmented version of the A theme, with its joyously clangorous percussion strikes, even more so.

The brass and percussion theme from section A does not appear in its original form as it does in *Floating World*, but is still very recognizable due to its melodic contour. We see here the homophonic treatment of the A theme combined with a sho accompaniment in the upper strings. The use of high percussion instruments such as the glockenspiel add clarity to a section of this music that can seem lugubrious even with the flute playing in a relatively high tessitura. Without the added power of the piccolo, which Hovhaness eschews, the brass can easily overpower the most intrepid flutist here, so the glockenspiel is a welcome addition to the high register.

Following this section, Hovhaness cleanses our palate with the return of a *great crescendo* bar at rehearsal numbers twenty-four and twenty-six. In between these bars,
Hovhaness adds a section that I believe is there purely for its meditative and tranquil qualities, a kind of musical *Zen Garden* to provide a moment of reflection.

In a valedictory stroke of genius, Hovhaness closes with the work by combining the Eastern aleatoric music with Western, composed music. This is the only one of the three pieces that uses this clever device, and it provides a sense of closure that the other two works do not have.

Formal and Orchestral Analysis of *Meditation on Zeami*

*Meditation on Zeami* is, in some ways, the most Asian of the three works being discussed in this essay. Hovhaness uses the *introduction, surprise vision* and *hymn of praise* form in this work as he does the two others, but he does not give us as obvious a return to the A theme as he does in *Ode to the Temple of Sound* and *Floating World*. Western listeners, accustomed to the sonata-allegro form containing a recapitulation, usually expect large-scale works to make an obvious return to this A theme. Hovhaness however, eschews this convention, choosing instead to treat one theme in a manner that the work may appear at first listening to be through-composed in a manner similar to Asian composition. This deceptive aspect of the work is part of what makes it so fascinating. Additionally, Hovhaness closes the work solely with aleatoric writing, making no attempt to meld the east and the west as he does in *Ode*.

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49 Ibid
The work opens with an introduction that features a meditatively mournful theme presented by the violas. This introduction, which contains percussion interpolations throughout, is eighteen bars in length. The theme that Hovhaness introduces in measure nineteen is the main theme of the entire work.50

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Fig. 7: Meditation on Zeami, Flute Theme
Eventually, the second flute joins the first to close this section, which leads us to the
description at rehearsal number three. This is another example of the *sho*-like music with the
dragonfly effect discussed earlier, and it extends to rehearsal four, where the dragonfly
effect is taken over by percussion and the ‘celleli play their version of the A theme.

It appears here that Hovhaness edited out a large portion of the work, as the rehearsal
numbers jump from four to seven. It is now the violins turn to play the A theme. This
continues through rehearsal eight, with the ‘celleli closing out this section of the work. The
*sho* music reappears at rehearsal nine in declamatory fashion, announcing that the brass
will now play the A theme. Hovhaness instructs the brass to play this in a “noble,
majestic and heroic”\(^{51}\) manner, and the resounding percussion helps to give this section a
regal bearing. The violins act as harmony in this section in the manner described earlier
in *Ode to the Temple of Sound*.

This regal section extends until just before rehearsal twelve, where a brief
transition leads us into a version of the A theme played by bassoons and flutes.

Hovhaness has the bassoons playing in a very high register and the flutes in a very low
register, lending this section a mysterious and ghostlike feel. Hovhaness uses *sho* and
dragonfly effect writing from rehearsal thirteen to fourteen, with the woodwinds and
brass acting as surrogates to the mouth organ in this instance.

Following this is the first aleatoric section of this work, and as in *Ode*, this is the
harbinger of a B section to come, serving also as the moment of surprise. Hovhaness
introduces this section into the piece at a far later point than he does in either *Ode* or
*Floating*, waiting until the work is almost one-third completed before moving on to this
transitional point. Hovhaness presents the A theme five times before reaching this

\(^{51}\) Ibid, 29.
transition. In comparison, Hovhaness presents it only twice in Ode before the transition and not at all in Floating before moving on! Hovhaness uses the one great crescendo effect to prepare us for the main theme played by clarinet with harp accompaniment. This goes into a sho and dragonfly transition, whereupon the main theme is played in all three flutes in canon. This transition to the B section is slightly shorter than the similar section in Ode, and significantly shorter than the analogous section in Floating.

The B section itself in Zeami is also compact in relation to the other two works, lasting a scant thirty-one bars. Compare this to the 142 measures of Ode and seventy in Floating. This section consists of a ghostly theme presented in unison by the glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes and viola. The theme continues until they reach an aleatoric transition, which takes us to rehearsal twenty-seven or A₁.

Hovhaness opens the A₁ section with four bars of dragonfly effect writing, followed by the A theme presented in the same manner as it was rehearsal ten. This section continues similarly from rehearsal twenty-eight to rehearsal thirty-two, where it is interrupted by an aleatoric section with the trombones playing the A theme while the flutes play the A theme in inversion.

The “noble, majestic and heroic” music returns at rehearsal thirty-three and ends at rehearsal thirty-six. This is the last time we will see the theme in this iteration. Hovhaness chooses to close the piece in a very un-Western manner, presenting the A theme twice more in meditative aleatoric writing and closing with almost thirty seconds of chaotic aleatoric writing. This is writing that is completely Eastern in intent and affect, and it brings to mind the manner in which Hovhaness describes Floating World, as

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52 Ibid, 34.
representing “old Japanese Buddhist concept of uncertainty, change, undependability, insubstantial qualities of the world.”\textsuperscript{53} To close a work this way leaves a typical western listener, accustomed to the finality of the authentic cadence, wondering if the piece has truly ended. I believe it is just this kind of uncertainty that Hovhaness was attempting to achieve, and he succeeds brilliantly.

Formal and Orchestrational Analysis of *Floating World*

This chapter closes with an analysis of *Floating World*, which lies between *Ode* and *Zeami* in regards to how it references eastern and western inspiration and influences. While *Floating* has the satisfying return to the A theme found in *Ode*, it ends in the mysterious and unsettling manner of *Zeami*. In addition, *Floating* contains aleatoric passages that are far longer and more involved than either *Ode* or *Zeami*, while the B section lies somewhat between the other two works in length at seventy bars to *Ode*’s 142 and *Zeami*’s thirty-one.

**Table 3. *Floating World* Formal Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A section</th>
<th>B section</th>
<th>A 1 section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning to end of rehearsal seventeen.</td>
<td>Rehearsal eighteen to end of rehearsal thirty-eight.</td>
<td>Rehearsal thirty-nine to end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages two to twenty-six.</td>
<td>Pages twenty-seven to forty-five.</td>
<td>Pages forty-six to fifty-eight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of measures in section: thirty-nine.</td>
<td>Number of measures in section: seventy.</td>
<td>Number of measures in section: thirty-five.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Floating* opens with the shortest introduction of the three works, with only eight bars between the opening and the aleatoric transition or surprise. In keeping with much of the music from this period, this music is very somber. The contrabasses play the cloud effect here, but it is the sinister counterpart to the ethereal version found in *Ode* played by the harp and celeste. Trombones, first in canon, and then in unison, play a terrifying fanfare that has some aspects of the A theme to come. The glissando motive at measure seven is worth taking note of, as Hovhaness returns to it at several important places in this work.
Following this very brief introduction is the first great crescendo, marking beginning of the surprise section. The rapidity with which we’ve arrived at it coupled with its length make it quite unique amongst these three pieces. Additionally, Hovhaness chose not to introduce the A theme in its complete form in this introduction in contrast to Ode and Zeami. He instead waits until after the first great crescendo to present the A theme at rehearsal number 2. Hovhaness does this in the ‘celli with an aleatoric percussion accompaniment.\textsuperscript{54}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{54} Alan Hovhaness, \textit{Floating World-Ukiyo}, New York: C.F. Peters, 1964, 5.}
Fig. 8: Floating World, Main Theme
The A theme is presented only once before Hovhaness goes into a sho-like transition, leading to rehearsal seven. This climaxes in loud wails from the first trumpet. These wails are a fragment of the second bar of the theme presented at rehearsal two. Following this is another great crescendo, and a reappearance of the A theme.

\[55\] Ibid, 9.
\[56\] Ibid, 5.
Fig. 9: Floating World, Trumpet Wail

Hovhaness now does something very unlike the other two works. He chooses to go forward at rehearsal thirteen by developing the trumpet wail fragment from the previous aleatoric section. This is quite unlike the other works, where he only presents
the themes in their entirety or even elongated. This is a curious nod to western compositional techniques. The orchestrational device of the sho is again in evidence here, with the contrabasses adding the dragonfly effect in pizzicato.

Hovhaness closes this section at rehearsal thirteen and continues with an aleatoric section that gives us both the fragmented version in flutes and trombones at rehearsal fourteen and the full version at rehearsal fifteen in the flute section. This is followed by a curious pizzicato rendition of the great crescendo and a slightly modified version of the trumpet wail fragment played by the bassoons at rehearsal seventeen. Hovhaness also brings the opening trombone glissandi back in this aleatoric section, hearkening back to the opening.

It is worth mentioning the cloud or carpet device that Hovhaness uses to stunning effect again at this point. This effect appears with greater success and more often in Floating World than in either of the other two works. One can imagine either of the other two works without the cloud device. In Floating, it is simply indispensable.

Hovhaness begins the B section here, painting a musical portrait of the Japanese legend of Don Noura. This is the story of an epic battle during which Japanese warriors committed suicide by flinging themselves into the ocean rather than surrendering to their adversaries. The legend goes on to relate that blind priests sang epic poems in their vain attempts to console the ghosts of the suicidal warriors. Hovhaness states that this legend was the inspiration for the ghostly march that makes up this section.

As in the B sections of Ode and Zeami, Hovhaness introduces new thematic material here and as well as a completely different musical affect. This is a stern march,

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notable for its relentlessness. Hovhaness begins the B section with an introduction featuring the percussion section. This is an ostinato, which continues throughout the B section. This introduction is followed by muted violas playing very softly yet marcato, as though the troops are off in the distance. The woodwinds respond with a slurred, serpent-like rendition of this theme.

Hovhaness increases both tension and dynamic by adding instruments and raising the tessitura, climaxing in a huge triple forte at the bar before rehearsal thirty-four. The agitated trombone glissandi found at the beginning of the work appear yet again, by this point becoming a leitmotif through sheer repetition. The brass section does the heavy lifting here, with woodwinds dropping out completely at the climax of this section! The immense crescendo in the tam-tam at the bar before rehearsal thirty-four, reminiscent of similar crescendos found in Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, adds tremendous visceral excitement and is one of the most effective moments in this work from an orchestrational standpoint.

Following this is an aleatoric section that opens with a massive quadruple forte at rehearsal thirty-four, containing fragments of the A theme, most noticeably in the trumpets. Hovhaness brings the dynamic down through decrescendos and thinning out of orchestration. This is all in preparation for something that, to be most effective, the audience receives no preparation.

The hymn of praise or final fulfillment or glorification portion of this work, beginning at rehearsal thirty-nine, opens with an enormous crash of sound. Every instrument in the orchestra, except for the contrabasses, plays on the downbeat, and the

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sense is that this is not unlike what one might imagine being ambushed feels like. It is, to my thinking, the most effective and exciting example of the *hymn of praise* found in these three works. As the A theme is presented in its original form without any augmentation or alteration of intervals, it is more clearly heard in *Floating* than it is in either *Zeami* or *Ode*.

The orchestration here is very standard for these hymn of praise sections; homophonic melodically with a sho-like accompaniment in the strings. The sudden interruptions by the trombone playing the glissandi from measure seven of the work imbue this section with an especially tragic quality. It is a pleading, desperate sound, and it is difficult to avoid seeing the terror of soldiers forced into suicide here. Hovhaness calls for the French horns to play with their bells up here, presumably to add volume while knowing that tonal beauty would be compromised.

This section extends through to rehearsal forty-four, and is followed by an extended aleatoric section reminiscent of the close of *Zeami* in length and style. One can just barely make out fragments of the A theme in the chaos and the piece ends in a massive crescendo that lasts for almost a full minute.
CHAPTER 6
PERFORMANCE PRACTICE ISSUES

The works which are the focus of this essay, *Ode to the Temple of Sound*, *Meditation on Zeami*, and *Floating World*, present unique challenges to performers of these works. For the instrumentalist, true extended techniques do not go far beyond the use of glissandi in the woodwinds. In addition, these glissandi rarely appear outside of the aleatoric sections.

The next issue presents itself at rehearsal number seven of *Ode to the Temple of Sound*,\(^59\) where flutes play in canon.

The issue is the timing of subsequent entrances after the initial one, but this is actually quite simple. Hovhaness’ own recorded performances of such passages, such as the one he references during his lecture at Elmira College, show that these canons happen very much in rhythm.\(^60\) Additionally, as one can see from the example above, Hovhaness draws lines connecting the antecedent flute lines to the consequent ones, making it very clear when the canonic entrances need to occur.

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\(^{60}\) Alan Hovhaness, "Giant Melody in Nature and Art", to Elmira College, 14 February 1967, Elmira, NY.
Fig. 10: Ode to the Temple of Sound, Flute Canon
Technical Problems for the Conductor

For the conductor, the most immediate concern is communicating the passage of one aleatoric measure to the next. Hovhaness very helpfully marks each aleatoric measure with its own rehearsal number, which makes verbal rehearsing much more convenient. However, if the conductor is very clear about using one hand to mark the passage of bars while the opposite one shapes the dynamics and phrasing, the need to stop and give direction can be minimized.

My first performance of these works was with the Filharmonia Bourgas in Bourgas, Bulgaria. Needless though it may be to say, I do not speak any Bulgarian and most of the orchestra did not speak English. I did, however, learn to count up to one hundred in Bulgarian, a skill that proved to be tremendously helpful for the initial readings of passages such as this one, from *Floating World*.61

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rapid, repeat and repeat, not together.
possibly 10 seconds.
I found that saying the rehearsal numbers loudly, simultaneous with a firm downbeat in my baton hand to mark the passage of one aleatoric measure to the next, made my intentions very clear. It was not long before it was unnecessary to say the numbers out loud.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS

The most important point for performers of Ode to the Temple of Sound, Meditation on Zeami, and Floating World is that these works can be looked at through the prism of Western Music and still receive successful performances. While it is certainly useful to have knowledge of eastern instruments and religious practices, performers who follow Hovhaness’ clear directions will have no difficulty in navigating the aleatoric sections while giving meaningful performances of these works. It is necessary and helpful when studying these works, as it is in studying works from the canon of great western art music, to be aware of the formal characteristics of these works.

Recommendations for Further Dissemination

As these works are not especially challenging technically, they are an excellent choice for youth orchestras. Additionally, as melodies are always played by several instruments simultaneously, there is a sense of security that comes from hearing several colleagues playing one’s part together. This is not to say these works are easy or wouldn’t be satisfying for experienced orchestras to play. In fact, they seem to hew to the fine line of being just challenging enough to be interesting to professionals while remaining accessible enough to avoid causing frustration for young musicians.

Musically speaking, Ode and Floating will be the easiest works for young musicians to grasp. Zeami was rather less successful with the young musicians I worked
with than the other works, but is a worthwhile work to program if one has already exposed one’s musicians to Hovhaness’ musical language.

One other important consideration for conductors of youth orchestras to consider is that percussion and brass sections (which often have extended tacet passages in most western music written before 1900) play a prominent role in all of these works, and are in fact playing almost constantly. My experience as a conductor of several youth orchestras has taught me that younger musicians need to be playing as much as possible. This gives these younger musicians the sense that they are an integral part of the musical proceedings, and keeps boredom from setting in.

Recommendations for Further Study and Needs for Performance, Documentation and Scholarship

The most useful document for musicians preparing to perform works from Hovhaness’ fourth period is by Arnold Rosner, entitled “An Analytical Survey of the Music of Alan Hovhaness.”62 It is thorough, detailed and straightforward.

There is a severe paucity of detailed biographical information about Hovhaness, and even less in the way formal studies of his music. There is a need for a large scale biography of the composer’s life and works, and my hope is that recently renewed interest Hovhaness’ music will lead to just such a volume.

As there are no extant commercial recordings of any of the three works, there is a need for a high-quality commercial recording of this music. This need will be filled in the near future by a recording to be released on the Centaur Label, performed by the Frost Symphony Orchestra of the University of Miami, conducted by this author.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


