

PHCD

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# Richard Yardumian

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*The Utah Symphony Orchestra*  
*Varujan Kojian, conductor*

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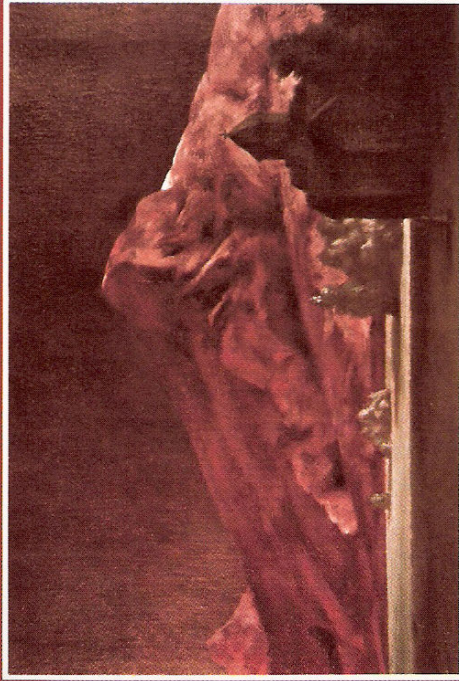
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# Richard Yardumian

SYMPHONY NO.2 "Psalms"

*Lili Chookasian, contralto*

ARMENIAN SUITE



VARUJAN KOJIAN  
THE UTAH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

# RICHARD YARDUMIAN

## SYMPHONY NO.2

### *World Premiere Recording of the 1981 Revised Edition*

## ARMENIAN SUITE

Richard Yardumian (1917-1985 - Philadelphia) enjoyed a rather unusual career as a twentieth-century composer. Although he was a largely self-taught composer, by the mid-1940's his music had attracted the attention of Leopold Stokowski, Jose Iturbi, and Eugene Ormandy, who encouraged and supported the young composer's work. The association with Ormandy was particularly fruitful as Yardumian maintained the status of composer-in-residence with the Philadelphia Orchestra for nearly fifteen years. (ca. 1950-64). The premiers, recordings, and international exposure afforded by this affiliation opened the door to performances around the world.

The **Armenian Suite** and **Symphony No.2** embody the two dominant concerns which, aside from music, have been most prominent in Yardumian's life - his religious beliefs and his Armenian heritage. His parents, Rev. Haig Y. and Lucia A. Yardumian, were immigrants from Armenia, who had come to America in 1906 to escape religious persecution. They brought with them folk songs of their native land, which were often sung in their home and became part of the natural atmosphere of the young Yardumian's childhood.

Although he had no formal musical training until his early twenties, Yardumian grew up in an environment of classical music created by his brother Elijah, who was studying piano at the newly-founded Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. His brother's daily practice sessions, as well as numerous informal concerts in their home by Elijah's colleagues, provided Yardumian with exposure to the standard classical literature. His first attempts at making music himself consisted of recreating at the piano this music he had heard, meanwhile experimenting with new sounds of his own.

It was inevitable that his first composition would reflect these musical influences of his youth. At age fourteen he wrote a lullaby based on an American lullaby, which became part of his first composition for orchestra, the six-movement **Armenian Suite**, written five years later, at age 19 (1937). The entire work was inspired by the folk melodies sung by his parents (to whom it is dedicated), but is largely original and exhibits Yardumian's own emerging style. A seventh-movement finale was added seventeen years later (1954) at the suggestion of Eugene Ormandy, who premiered the complete work with the Philadelphia Orchestra on March 5, 1954, and recorded it the following year. It was included on the program of the Philadelphia Orchestra's

first European tour in 1955 and has since been performed widely by the Philadelphia Orchestra and other American and European orchestras, including use of the second "Dance" as the signature music of the Voice of America broadcasting behind the Iron Curtain.

While the suite is based on authentic Armenian melodies, the composer emphasizes, "This is not nostalgic imitation of Armenian music, but a contribution of my Armenian heritage to America - an American seed grown in American soil." He further explains the role of the folk melodies in the work: "As is often the case with a child, the words of the poem did not make the definite impression that the spirit of the music did. Thus it is that the 'Introduction,' which is a harvest song, evidently became in my mind a music associated with the calling together of people, such as church bells call the village people together to worship. It is the curtain raiser to many stories which are to be told, stories of dances, love, hope, tragedy, sorrow, worship - all of an individual race of people whose Christian history is so full of struggles and frustrations, but not without promise of inner peace and hope."

The **Armenian Suite** takes on the authentic character of its source of inspiration in the simplicity and colorfulness of style, and more specifically through use of characteristic elements of folk music such as the drone, simple variation and part forms, and rhythmic vitality. However, some of the melodies are original ('Song'), while others are transformations of authentic tunes to suit the musical end of a particular section. Such is the case with the first 'Dance,' which was originally a sentimental love song, and the 'Interlude,' whose melodic source is treated freely throughout. The setting which Yardumian has given to the melodies, old and new, is unmistakably in the western music tradition, with its characteristic harmonic language, use of counterpoint, and emphasis on orchestral color.

The following analysis of the folk songs used in the **Armenian Suite** was provided by Archbishop Tor Kom Manogolian for the program of the Philadelphia premiere: "All the folksongs used in the suite are authentic and genuinely Armenian. The theme of 'Introduction' is taken from the folksong called 'The Harvest.' The peasant, while reaping his crops, recollects the springtime when he was ploughing and sowing his seed and is anticipating hopefully the coming winter at which time he will rest. The text expresses the action of gathering the harvest, binding together the bales and stacking them in the cart.

"Although the theme of the 'Song' is congenial to the nature of the Armenian folksong, it is hardly possible to identify it exactly. Most probably it is a reminiscence of some song recollected from early childhood. In it is felt the prayerful anguish of a soul which wanders about without losing hope of finding the precious thing lost. In the 'Lullaby' which follows, the mother, rocking the cradle, tells her child to sleep soundly. The golden cross upon your neck for you is a protector, and has been tied to your wedding ribbon by the priest. The 'Dance' following the 'Lullaby' is a delightful lovesong: 'My love like a sycamore tree.' The 'Interlude' suggests the melody known as 'The bells rang out good morning.'

“The theme of the second ‘Dance’ is from a folksong where the lover is waiting for the beloved one who has not yet come. It may be translated: ‘Though it is cloudy, it’s not snowing. My heart is full of fire and there is no sleep for my eyes.’ Another theme interwoven in this dance is taken from the folksong known as the ‘Ploughing Song.’ The peasant is encouraging his oxen by calling out and talking with them in a friendly manner: ‘Pull tightly, thou oxen; may God keep thy owner.’”

The “Finale” is a mosaic of new melodies and themes from previous sections (particularly the first “Dance,” and the “Song”), concluding the suite with fleeting recollections of the moods and colors of the entire work. Its composition marked an important step in Yardumian’s developing style. It is the first of his works to employ the technique of weaving together several melodies in a contrapuntal quodlibet, which is a basic element of his later works.

**Symphony No.2** was written during Yardumian’s period of affiliation with the Philadelphia Orchestra, though the movements were actually composed seventeen years apart. The first (1947), originally conceived as the beginning of a “Symphony of Psalms,” was initially released as a one-movement work for voice and orchestra under the title **Psalm 130**. When Ormandy was shown the score in 1954, he immediately scheduled it to be premiered in April 1955 and to be recorded along with several other of Yardumian’s works which had been previously premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra. Although the first movement was written for tenor voice and orchestra, when the second movement was commissioned by Ormandy in 1964, he suggested that it be written for contralto Lilit Chookasian. The complete symphony was premiered and recorded by Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1964 and has since received numerous performances in North and South America and Europe.

The work is dedicated to The Reverend Theodore Pitcairn, a close friend and priest of the Swedenborgian church of which Yardumian was a member. Yardumian’s devotion to his church has strongly influenced his compositions, from the overt use of religious texts and musical genres to less obvious symbolism in the actual musical structure.

The first movement (**Psalm 130**) has been described by Yardumian as a musical painting in which the orchestra delineates a background of two words - the spiritual and the natural. A literal translation of the psalm from the Hebrew is sung by the voice, representing the psalmist David, in a highly pictorial musical setting. Most of the musical/pictorial material is presented in the first section of the movement: the shimmering night scene at the beginning, the chorale-like setting of the opening lines of the text (“Out of the depths”), the euphonium solo expressing the spirit of man ascending to God in Heaven followed by the trumpet response as the spirit of God descends to man, and a dialogue between the flute, English horn, and muted trumpet, and the voice.

The movement as a whole is constructed in a free sonata form, with a central section developing the main thematic material and a return to the original ideas in varied form in the third section.

The musical language is that of Yardumian’s original “chromatic quadradic” system, which is a tonal twelve-note system based on chords of superimposed thirds generated from alternate black and white notes of the keyboard.

The psalm texts for the second movement are set in a less pictorial fashion, serving as the inspiration for a more abstract musical composition. The voice continues to portray that of David, but now as a priest calling the people to worship. The texture is predominantly contrapuntal, with the various polyphonic voices representing the voices of angels from the different quarters of heaven.

The sonata form and the prelude and fugue are combined with elements of the concerto and cantata in forming the structure of the work. After the introductory prologue for solo voice, the basic material for the movement is presented in an overture-like prelude. A powerful *maestoso* section featuring dotted rhythms begins the prelude proper. This is immediately followed by a statement of the two main themes of the work, a quotation from Luther’s hymn **Aus tiefer Noth** (Out of the depths) and an original countersubject. These are limited among the instruments of the orchestra and are accompanied by new countersubjects as the section progresses. A declamatory horn solo provides a bridge to a slow “aria” before the large development section begins. The extensive vocal cadenza at the end of the development reveals the influence of the concerto, summarizing many of the themes and motives of the movement. A long, gradually building march serves as a coda to the movement, which is concluded with a return of the euphonium solo and the “night” music from the first movement, rounding out and unifying the entire work.

The seventeen-year span between the composition of the two movements is vividly observable in the distinctly different styles of each. The second movement illustrates the evolution of the earlier chromatic quadradic system to its later modal polyphonic form and serves as a direct and important predecessor to the large works of Yardumian’s more recent years - **Mass: Come, Creator Spirit** and the oratorio **The Story of Abraham**.

—Notes by *Mary Kinder Loisel*

## Text of Symphony No.2

- I. Out of the depths I cry to Thee, Jehovah.  
Lord, hear my voice, let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my prayers.  
Who, Lord, shall stand? Who, Lord, shall stand?  
If Thou should'st mark iniquities, Jah, Lord, who shall stand?  
With Thee forgiveness, with Thee forgiveness,  
With Thee forgiveness, that Thou may'st be feared.

I have awaited Jehovah, my soul doth wait,  
And in His word have I hoped.  
More than those waiting the morning, my soul the Lord,  
Than those awaiting the morning.  
Let Israel hope in Jehovah,  
For with Jehovah, mercy and plenteous redemption.  
And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

II. Come, let us bow down, kneel before Jehovah.  
O come, let us worship, and kneel before Jehovah our Maker.  
Come, let us sing to Jehovah.

Come, let us sing unto Jehovah, with joyful songs unto the rock of our salvation.  
Jehovah, my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

The land is Jehovah's, and the fullness thereof,  
The world and they that dwell therein.

For He hath founded it upon the seas, upon the flood established it, He.

Who shall ascend to Jehovah's mount?

Who shall ascend to Jehovah's mount, or who shall stand in His holy place?

The clean of hands and the pure in heart, who lifted not to vanity his soul,  
The pure in heart, who lifted not to vanity his soul.

Jehovah's blessing he shall bear,

And justice from the God of our salvation.

He shall bear.

This is the generation that seek Him,  
That seek Thy faces, O Jacob. Selah.

Lift up your heads, ye gates; be ye lift up, ye eternal doors,  
And the King of glory, the King of glory shall come in.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the mount from whence comes my help.  
My help from Jehovah, who made the heav'ns and land,  
who made the heav'ns and land.

He suffers not thy foot to moved be.  
He slumbers not that keepeth thee;

Lo, He that keepeth Israel shall not slumber nor sleep.

Jehovah thy keeper, Jehovah thy shade upon thy right hand.  
The sun shall not smite thee, the sun shall not smite thee,  
The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor shall the moon,  
Nor shall the moon, nor shall the moon by night.  
Jehovah thee shall save from all evil. He shall save thy soul.  
Jehovah preserve thee from all evil. He thy soul shall save.  
Jehovah save thy going in from this time forth and even for evermore,  
for ever, evermore.

Who this King of glory?

Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle.

Who this King of glory?

Jehovah strong and mighty in battle.

Who this King of glory? Who this King of glory?

Who this King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle.

Who this King of glory?

Jehovah of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.

## VARUJAN KOJIAN

Varujan Kojian began his tenure as music director and conductor of the Utah Symphony at the beginning of the 1980-81 season, at the age of 34. He succeeded Maurice Abravanel, who retired after 32 years at the helm. Mr. Kojian was selected from over 120 candidates considered for the position.

Kojian, an American of Armenian descent, distinguished himself at a very young age as an outstanding violinist and not long thereafter as a conductor. Graduating from the Paris Conservatoire at age 13 with a first prize in violin, he came to the United States to study with Ivan Galamian at the Curtis Institute of Music. Later, as one of 280 violin students to audition for Jascha Heifetz' master classes, Mr. Kojian was one of three selected.

After four years of study with Heifetz, Zubin Mehta offered Mr. Kojian the post of assistant concertmaster of the Los Angeles Philharmonic at age 19. While serving in this capacity, he became interested in conducting and began the serious study of the baton. For practical experience, he formed an orchestra of his own, later becoming musical director of the Beverly Hills Orchestra. In 1970, when the Philharmonic was searching for an assistant conductor, Zubin Mehta asked for Varujan Kojian.