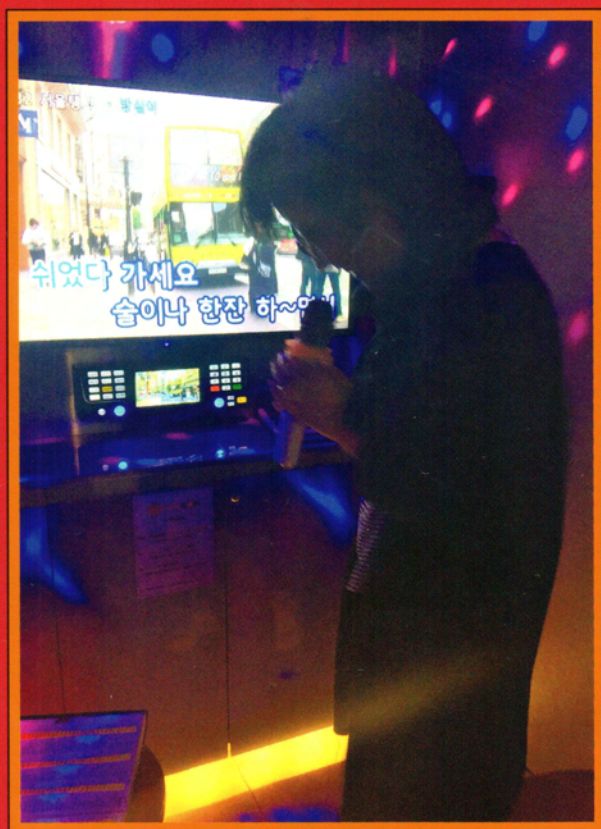


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Book Reviews

Music of Azerbaijan: From Mugham to Opera. Aida Huseynova. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. Ethnomusicology Multimedia. xxix + 326 pp., b&w illustrations, maps, music, videos, audio. ISBN 978-0-253-01937-0 (hardcover), \$80.00; ISBN 9780253019493 (e-book), \$29.99.

This book traces the different Azerbaijani art-music forms from the *mugham* through its fusion with Western classical, jazz, and world art music. It is written to introduce this heritage to readers and listeners worldwide. Apart from Inna Narodiskaya's *Song from the Land of Fire* (2006), it is important to stress that no English-language scholarly literature or research has discussed Azerbaijani musical syncretism in any depth before. As the author states in her introduction, "[T]his is an American book about Azerbaijani music," and it reflects research with many Azerbaijani and American consultants, including a theoretical approach drawn from the work of Bruno Nettl. The exciting style of this study makes it easier to understand more specialized topics, such as the backdrop of cultural life under Soviet influence, and we learn that Azerbaijani musical development was not a product of Soviet cultural politics but rather grew from and reflected deep and complex cultural processes.

In chapter 1, "Azerbaijani Musical Nationalism during the Pre-Soviet and Soviet Eras," we are given a historical overview of how Azerbaijan was involved in Westernization and modernization by Russia. Against the "cosmopolitanism" backed by Russia, a countermovement appeared that supported "localism" and pride in local heritage. At the same time Azerbaijanis tried to be free from the dominant cultural heritage of Iran, creating a *mugham* style of their own.

The author speaks about the early works of the first Azerbaijan composer, Uzeyir Hajibeyli, who composed the first national opera and stressed the importance of the feasibility of an East-West synthesis. We are also introduced to the major works of Hajibeyli, Afrasiyab Badalbeyli, Fikret Amirov, Gara Garayev, and Vagif Mustafazade, all born in this period.

Huseynova paints a picture of the Janus-faced Soviet era, when "music and art in general could be 'national in form,' only to the extent that this did not interfere with being 'socialist in content'" (40). After 1932 the Proletkult declared war on cultural heritage of all Soviet nations: in Azerbaijan specifically

against *tar* and *mugham* opera. This system continued until the end of the Soviet era, although after Stalin's death in 1953 the composers received more opportunity to express their individual voices.

Chapter 2, "Pioneers of the New Azerbaijani Musical Identity," explores the role of three Azerbaijani composers developing an East-West musical synthesis: Hajibeyli, the pioneer of Azerbaijani-composed music; Garayev, with his supranational vision; and Amirov, with a more distinct Middle Eastern heritage.

We get a detailed picture of the upbringing, artistic perception, and credos of these three composers, the evolution of their careers, and their Soviet ideological and musical influences. The author draws this important conclusion: "[T]he true discoveries of Azerbaijani composers lay in reimagining and reinterpreting the well-known form and genres of Western music through the lens of their native music and culture rather than through Russian orientalist clichés" (24).

Russians were taken as European in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijani composers mastered forms of Western music through Russian composers. According to Richard Taruskin, "Russian musicians have always construed their identities in a larger European context" (1997, xv), yet "[f]or the French . . . Russia was East and Other" (*ibid.*, 182).

Chapter 3, "The Russian Factor: Facilitating or Disrupting Synthesis?," presents two case studies on how Reinhold Gliere (from the 1920s) and Dmitri Shostakovich (after the 1940s) were involved in the process of Azerbaijani mastering Western styles. The author effectively illustrates the case of Russian (Belgian-Jewish) composer Gliere, who understood not only different musical trends and their mutual interactions but also their underlying political backdrop. The invitation of Gliere to Baku to compose an opera was a political and an artistic project; his principal mission was to expand the colonial rule of Russia over Azerbaijan. Although his opera *Shahsenem* was seemingly a great success, there was a huge gap between Gliere's piece and Azerbaijani music and culture. As Igor Ledogorov wrote, "It would be a huge mistake to assume that Gliere could create our national operatic style" (1927, 94), and Huseynova applies Taruskin's reference to Dvorak's music as "tourist nationalism" (*ibid.*, 95) to explain why Gliere's music was not incorporated into the Azerbaijani culture. In contrast, Shostakovich had a significant impact on developing the composed music tradition in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani composers did not simply adopt the principles of Shostakovich's music, such as imitative polyphony, but they rediscovered them in alignment with the principles of their national music system.

In chapters 4, 5, and 6 the author analyzes the effects of Western musical currents on Azerbaijani composers, from Viennese classicism, Romanticism,

Italian opera, and Russian composers, to modern and postmodern styles. Chapter 4, “The Beginning of the National Style: 1999–the 1930s,” contains most of the music analysis with extensive song and audio (PURL) examples from the accompanying CD. The examples acquaint the reader with a variety of forms and genres of Azerbaijani-composed music. Viennese classicism became a dominant source in the early twentieth century. Here the art of the *ashigs*, or “wandering minstrels,” was the connection to traditional music. Romanticism was also adopted into Azerbaijani music, explained by the author as characterized by a high level of sensuality typical of both Romantic music and the *mugham*.

In chapter 5, “Growing Maturity: 1940–the Early 1960s,” we learn that after the Viennese styles, neoclassicism had a direct effect on Azerbaijani music, first through Shostakovich and then Sergei Prokofyev. The main Azerbaijani composers of this style, in which *mugham* also played a distinctive role, were Garayev, Jovdat Hajiyev, Malikov, and Amirov.

In chapter 6, “The Spirit of Experimentalism: Since the 1960s,” we get acquainted with post-1960s neo-tonality and a “back to the neoclassicism” trend. Not surprisingly, besides folk songs and *ashig* art, *mugham* music offered a special tone to these musical works. Huseynova notices that in connection with “neofolklorism,” the term “may apply to the whole body of Azerbaijani composed music, as this repertoire is entirely based on the adaptation within art music forms of the nation’s oral musical heritage” (177). In this period both minimalism and postmodernism were represented at the same time. As in previous chapters, the author provides ample notes and comparisons to Western trends and important Western composers.

Chapter 7, “Songwriters,” is an introduction to the rich song tradition of Azerbaijan mixing Western and local traditional elements. Some of the modern Azerbaijani songs have direct links to very simple and beautiful traditional ones. Another source of the songs were the popular Soviet “mass songs,” such as the Soviet *estrada*. In the 1960s Western-like popular songs were also composed, and the 1990s Turkish popular music dominated the more and more nationalist Azerbaijani song culture, yet instead of rock, a special *meykhana*, or “tavern” style, was favored.

Chapter 8, “Jazz *Mugham*,” presents the predominant style in Azerbaijani jazz born in the multiethnic environment of Baku. The role of *mugham* is found in the modality and to a lesser extent in the aesthetic and spiritual dimension of Azerbaijani jazz. The beginning of jazz in Baku can be attributed to the first oil boom, and in 1939 the Azerbaijani State Jazz orchestra was founded. We become acquainted with the activity of the first jazz musicians, for example, with that of Mustafazade, the more oriental *mugham* jazz played

by Babayev, and the representatives of the more Western-like jazz *mugham* (jazz-rock fusion). In the 1980s the influence of contemporary American jazz was significant, especially with Gambarov's album titled with the telling name *East or West?* Instead of *mugham*, Gambarov used folk-style dance melodies and *kemancha* (spike lute) in his compositions. The importance of jazz pianists, such as Amirov and Aziza (Mustafazade), are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 9, "Leaving the Post-Soviet Era Behind," considers new forms of East-West synthesis and recent issues within Azerbaijani music. After the split of the Soviet Union, as did several other nations, Azerbaijan became independent with increasing Western influence and backings. Today, Westernization and traditional music have been placed in the center of musical life. On the one hand, jazz and contemporary Western musics are in full bloom, yet, on the other, traditional and other forms of *mugham* are given great importance. Huseynova gives a detailed review of "Space of *Mugham*" events, in which she has taken part on many different occasions. Composed music continues with several new trends exploring archaic folklore layers; religious subjects, both Islamic and Christian; and the tragic Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of the late 1980s.

Chapter 10, "'*Mugham* Opera' of the Silk Road," reflects the continuing importance of pieces created by national composers before and during the Soviet era. Here the author describes in detail a reimagined version of Hajibeyli's 1908 opera *Leyli and Majnun* by the Silk Road Ensemble in 2007, which was reshaped into a 45-minute chamber piece leaving out several characters.

The book is completed with a glossary of essential terms (273), detailed notes for each chapter, an excellent bibliography, and an index. Also very important is the website Ethnomusicology Multimedia (<https://ethnomultimedia.org/book.html?bid=38>), which provides access to some 189 audio and video examples, listening guides and study questions, transliterations, and translations of the performed texts.

Let me suggest that due to the importance of *mugham* in Azerbaijani music, the book could also have the subtitle *Variations for the Theme Mugham*. In the "*Mugham: A Brief Introduction*" section of the introduction (20), we get an insight into *mugham* as a mode, a melodic type, and a genre, without which the rest of the book might be unintelligible. It is no wonder that the discussion of the Eastern *mugham* (and *ashig*) tradition versus the Western composed-music phenomenon runs through the book. It is true that the most important specialty of Azerbaijani music lies in its relation to *mugham* in each form. As the author points out, Russian ethnomusicologist Izaly Zemtsovsky justly

stated that “mugham maintains typological links with the music of the baroque era” (2013, 111).

The *mugham* principle is wide. From Morocco to Central and Southeast Asia, *mugham* presents a colorful palette of concrete existing forms within a vast geographical expanse. *Mugham* is almost as comprehensive an idea as classical music is in the Western world. Both music categories keep changing in space and time, eventually comprising very different compositions at a given place in a given time under the same names. *Mugham* can link to a given melody type in one culture, while only particular cadences are settled in a second, yet be defined by a special scale in a third. It is no wonder that *mugham* systems are defined differently in different places and that manuals on *mugham* define it differently yet again, offering conflicting information on the overall concept of *mugham* itself.

Azerbaijani *mugham* resisted Soviet influence. Many surviving Azerbaijani instrument types became equally tempered, however, and it is possible to play in groups with Western instruments, because the trio format of *mugham* performances did not change. *Mugham* never lost its vitality and has survived through oral tradition, handed over by master to disciple. Musicians notated *mugham*—these transcriptions remain as reference sources—but were rarely used by those who wanted to learn how to play *mugham* professionally. During the Soviet era, efforts were made to change the lyrics (from medieval sources) and the sad, melancholy motifs of the *mugham* as well. This endeavor did not succeed, because these works maintained their textual integrity.

Why has *mugham* become such an important part of identity, so strongly influencing the history of Azerbaijani composed music? Why not folk music instead, which influenced composers such as Béla Bartók, Maurice Ravel, or Claude Debussy or the compositions of many contemporary composers? Admiring Azerbaijani folk music, which almost exclusively consists of elementary tunes, we can easily have the feeling that we are at the fountainhead of music. At the same time, Azerbaijani folk music represents a unique hue in the musics of Turkic peoples, significantly deviating from the folk music of both neighboring and more distant Turkic ethnicities. Yet it is easy to understand that its melodies, consisting of only a few short lines, containing a small variety of sounds, could not awaken inspiration for Azerbaijani composers. Moreover, *mugham* preserved its basic values, surviving fatiguing Soviet times, folk singers (*ashigs*) playing compositions dedicated to Lenin and communism from the early 1920s, prohibitions against Islamic religious music (though continuing to exist), and also institutionalized jazz. I recommend this book not only for the lovers of *mugham* music, or solely for musicologists and ethnomusicologists, but also for those interested in the processes of the

old Soviet Union, in musical change, and in the struggles and syntheses of national and global tendencies.

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Beyond “Innocence”: Amis Aboriginal Song in Taiwan as an Ecosystem. Shzr Ee Tan. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012. 312 pp. + 1 CD-ROM, photographs, map, musical examples, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. ISBN: 978-1-4094-2436-9 (hardcover), \$96.00.

The Amis people, of Austronesian descent, are one of Taiwan’s 16 officially recognized indigenous groups. Very little scholarly work has been published in English on Taiwan aboriginal music; publications in Chinese have been uneven in quality. *Beyond “Innocence”* is especially welcome because of its comprehensive nature and because it allows an international readership to access information about this rich musical culture.

As the title of the book indicates, Tan proposes that Amis song be best understood as an ecosystem. Aiming to eschew the limits of linear analysis, she crafts her study to illuminate the crisscrossing, multidimensional network of the complex relationships involved in Amis musical creativity and, by extension, to that of Taiwan aboriginal song generally. She does this over six chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction begins with an overview of the infamous “Return to Innocence” case in which the voice of Amis singer Difang was sampled in the megahit released by the European