

# Arthur Vincent Lourié (1892-1966): Overview of Writings

The Russian composer Arthur Vincent Lourié (Artur Lur'ye, pseudonym of Naum Izraïlevitch Lur'ya) wrote many articles that were published in Russian, French, and English during his lifetime, some of which were republished in a collection by Jean Mouton that also contains a number of fragments ([\*Profanation et sanctification du temps. Journal musical Saint-Pétersbourg-Paris-New York\*](#), 1966). Lourié also authored a biography of conductor Serge Koussevitzky (for whom he also worked as a ghost-writer) published in New York in 1931 ([\*Sergei Koussevitzky and His Epoch. A Biographical Chronicle\*](#)).

Lourié's abundant correspondence is rich in aesthetic reflections and can be found in various archives: his letters to Serge Koussevitzky are held in the Library of Congress (Koussevitzky Collection), those to Igor Stravinsky (whose Russian correspondence up to 1939 was published by Viktor Varunc, *Perepiska s russkimi korrespondentami. Materialy k biografii* [Stravinsky: Letters with Russian correspondants. Material for a biography], Moscow, Kompositor, 1998-2003), and to Jacques and Raïssa Maritain are in the Fonds Jacques et Raïssa Maritain, at the Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg. The latter is the subject of a publication by Olesya Bobrik that is currently in preparation.

A diary covering Lourié's American years (after the Second World War) and conserved at the Paul Sacher Stiftung has been partially published by Olesya Bobrik and Ludmilla Korabel'nikova, whereas the diary from his interwar years in Paris has been lost. Several letters by Lourié are reprinted in Michail Kralin's romanticized biography *Artur i Anna* by Michail Kralin (1990, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Tomsk, Vodoley, 2000), which is centered on the relationship between Lourié and Anna Akhmatova, a subject which in turn inspired Vladimir Nepevny's film *Anna Akhmatova and Arthur Lourié, Words and Music* (2010).

Lourié regularly published in the most prestigious musical revues of the interwar years, including *La Revue musicale*, *Modern Music*, and *Music and Letters*, as well as in the publications of the Russian diaspora in Paris (the Eurasianist reviews *Yevraziya* and *Vyorsti*) and New York (mostly *Noviy zhurnal*), where he moved in 1941.

Lourié generally wrote to promote his own music or to support the music composed by Stravinsky (until the early 1930s) and interpreted by Koussevitzky. Despite (or perhaps because of) the activism of his writings, Lourié's articles are essential sources in the study of the history and aesthetics of musical neo-classicism, which the composer theorized in a series of articles directly related to the work of Stravinsky (Lourié planned to write a book on Stravinsky) and founded in Eurasianist political-philosophical thought. Recurrent themes include the crisis in Western culture, the historical and current place of Russian music, the need to a return to religion, the promotion of universalism in the face of individualism, (Lourié opens his now classic opposition of Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg in these terms), and the power of music to transform humanity (this was an vision of the Russian symbolist circles of Saint Petersburg that Lourié frequented in the 1910s).

It is possible to draw parallels between the aesthetics promoted in Lourié's writings and his musical output; this has been done for his *Concerto spirituale* (1928-1929), his two symphonies (*Sinfonia dialectica*, 1930; *Symphonie "Kormtchaia"*, 1939), and his opera *Le Maure de Pierre le Grand* (1945-1955).

Lourié's style is dense, with a tendency for complexity and metaphysical outbursts that was criticized by other music critics of his time. In a polemic on music criticism printed in the *Revue Pleyel* in 1926, Roland-Manuel sarcastically remarked that to read Lourié, one needed "bachelor's degrees in physical and natural sciences and a

doctorate in philosophy, or else an advanced degree in grammar" ("Jérémiades", no. 28, p. 12-15: 14).

Federico Lazzaro

22/03/2018

Trans. Chris Murray

To quote this article: Emmanuel Reibel, "Arthur Vincent Lourié (1892-1966): Overview of Writings", Dictionary of Composer's Writings, Dictéco [online], ed. E. Reibel, last edited: 15/09/2023, <https://preprod.dicteco2.ihrim.fr/person/32122>.