

Concert of
Wednesday,
April 13, 2022,
8:00pm

ROBERT SPANO,
conductor

YO-YO MA,
cello

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)
Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95,
(“From the New World”) (1893) 41 MINS

- I. Adagio — Allegro molto
- II. Largo
- III. Scherzo: Molto vivace
- IV. Allegro con fuoco

INTERMISSION 20 MINS

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)
Cello Concerto in B Minor, Op. 104 (1895) 42 MINS

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio, ma non troppo
- III. Finale: Allegro moderato
Yo-Yo Ma, cello

The use of cameras or recording devices during the concert is strictly prohibited. Please be kind to those around you and silence your mobile phone and other hand-held devices.

Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95,
(“From the New World”)

Symphony No. 9 is scored for two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings.

A Humble Beginning

Music lessons for the boy Antonín Dvořák were catch-as-catch-can. As a butcher’s son growing up in a small village, he was taught basic reading and math at a public school; by chance, his schoolmaster was an amateur musician who started the future composer on voice and violin. At the same time, Dvořák’s father began to prepare his son for a career as a butcher. In addition to teaching him about livestock, he insisted the boy learn German (a useful skill for a Czech tradesman living in the Austrian Empire). When the family moved to a neighboring village, Antonín found his way to the doorstep of a piano and organ teacher, all the while neglecting German. After some months, his father sent him away to live with a German-speaking family. Undaunted, Dvořák found another music teacher. When Antonín was 16, his father had a change of heart and sent him to organ school in Prague.

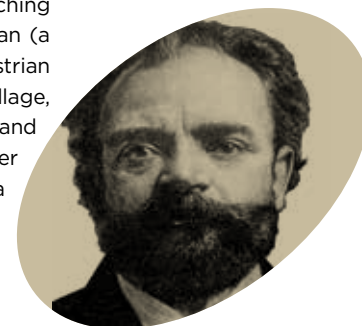
Dvořák’s existence in Prague was humble. For the next 16 years, he lived mainly with extended family and earned a meager wage playing viola in an opera orchestra. It was during that time that he fell in love with a colleague from the theater, the actress Josefina Čermáková. Much to his disappointment, she only wanted his friendship. All the while, he was teaching piano in her family home. Eventually, Dvořák courted her younger sister, Anna, who he married on November 15, 1873; baby Otakar came along five months later. His first love, Josefina, married a prominent politician, and they all remained close (this will become important in the composition of the Cello Concerto).

Nationalism

Not long after moving to Prague, Dvořák surpassed the abilities of his teachers and continued to develop musically through sheer will and invention. Playing in a theater

by Noel Morris
Program Annotator

- First ASO performance:
• March 16, 1947,
• Henry Sopkin, conductor
- Most recent
• ASO performances:
• October 20–22, 2016,
• Joseph Young, conductor



orchestra, he absorbed works by the German masters: Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Wagner, and wrote a copious amount of music.

The political climate in Prague was tense. Owing to a persistent “Germanization” of the Bohemian capital, pockets of Czech nationalism spread among the lower-middle class. Nationalists worked to gain majorities in various trade guilds; some criticized Dvořák for writing music that wasn’t “Czech” enough.

By 1876, the 35-year-old Dvořák had a family to support. He applied for a government grant awarded to talented and impoverished composers (Dvořák qualified on both counts). On the jury was a man who would change his life—Johannes Brahms. Brahms wrote to him, “Allow me quite shortly to thank you . . . for the great pleasure I have derived from the works you sent me. I have taken the liberty of writing about them, and especially the Duets to Mr. Fritz Simrock [Brahms’ own publisher.]”

He was referring to a set of Moravian Duets which Dvořák had composed as a favor to a Moravian patron. Simrock agreed to publish them in German. The public gobbled them up (to the Viennese, this “Moravian” music sounded pleasantly exotic). Sensing an opportunity, Simrock asked the composer to write more Slavic music, suggesting something along the lines of Brahms’ *Hungarian Dances*. All too grateful for the work, Dvořák composed his *Slavonic Dances*, not based on folk music as Brahms had done, but on themes of his own invention. As it happened, Simrock’s marketing gimmick worked well, and Dvořák was forevermore labeled a Czech nationalist. He never went penniless again.

The “New World” Symphony

In 1891, Dvořák thought he had achieved real status and security when he accepted a teaching position at the Prague Conservatory. But something turned his head. There was an American philanthropist named Jeannette Thurber who had persuaded the United States Congress to fund the National Conservatory of Music of America. Her dream was to engender a nationalistic movement in American music. Convinced that Dvořák, the famous Czech nationalist, was

the man for the job, she offered him an annual salary of \$15,000—25 times what he was paid in Prague. In truth, it took some arm-twisting, but Dvořák accepted the job and booked his passage to America.

Across the Atlantic, Thurber was advancing an extraordinary vision: to cultivate a uniquely American sound while offering musical training to students regardless of race or gender. Excited by the creative possibilities, Mrs. Thurber urged her star employee to write a Native American opera based on Longfellow’s poem *The Song of Hiawatha*. As she secured a librettist, Dvořák threw himself into the music, making sketches and writing down ideas. At the same time, he bathed in the sounds of American music, witnessing Native performers at *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* show and giving special attention to the spiritual, a style sung to him by Harry Burleigh, a student and grandson of former slaves.

Dvořák wrote his Symphony No. 9, “From the New World,” in New York City during the winter and spring of that first academic year, 1893. On the day of its premiere, he told a reporter that the inner movements, the Largo and Scherzo, used material for his upcoming opera *The Song of Hiawatha*.

Complications with the libretto foiled Dvořák’s dream of writing a Native American opera. After spending three years at the school in New York, he moved back to Prague. His American students went on to teach George Gershwin, Aaron Copland and Duke Ellington.

Cello Concerto in B Minor, Op. 104

In addition to the solo cello, this concerto is scored for two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings.

While living in New York City, Dvořák got to know Victor Herbert, the principal cellist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. In March of 1894, Dvořák crossed into Brooklyn to hear Herbert play his own Cello Concerto No. 2.

Traditionally, European composers had avoided writing concertos for the cello, owing to its mellow sound (they



- First ASO performances:
November 21-22, 1957,
Henry Sopkin, conductor
Donovan Schumacher, cello
- Most recent
ASO performances:
March 26-27, 2015,
Robert Spano, conductor
Lynn Harrell, cello

didn't believe it could hold its own alongside a symphony orchestra). Herbert proved them wrong; Dvořák went to hear the piece a second time and asked to borrow the score. With the cello sound in his ears, Dvořák got to thinking about his old friend Hanuš Wihan. Dvořák had toured with Wihan. Now he made up his mind to write for him a concerto. As Dvořák got to work on the piece, he received distressing news from home: his beloved sister-in-law, Josefina, was gravely ill. Overcome with emotion (and some homesickness), Dvořák crafted a tribute to her—he knew she loved his song “Leave Me Alone” and worked its themes into the fabric of the slow movement. He finished the concerto in February of 1895. At the end of the school year, he tendered his resignation and returned to Bohemia.

Not long after his homecoming, Josefina died. With a heavy heart, Dvořák picked up the manuscript of his Cello Concerto and revised the finale, echoing “Leave Me Alone” one last time in a wistful gesture at the end. He dedicated the piece to Wihan, who took issue with the new ending. Wihan put pen to paper and wrote a flashy cadenza for the ending and offered it to the composer. Not only did Dvořák reject the change, he also wrote the following notice to his publisher:

“I must insist that my work be published just as I have written it. I give you my work only if you promise me that no one—not even my esteemed friend Wihan—shall make any alteration in it without my knowledge and permission, also that there be no cadenza such as Wihan has made in the last movement. In short, it has to remain the way I have felt it and thought it out. The cadenza in the last movement is not in the score, nor in the piano reduction; I told Wihan as soon as he had shown it to me that it is not possible to cobble the work together in this manner. The finale ends gradually in a diminuendo, like a slow exhalation—with reminiscences from the first and second movements—the solo fades away to *pp*, then there is a crescendo, and the last measures are taken up by the orchestra, ending stormily. That is my idea, and I cannot abandon it.”



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ROBERT SPANO,
CONDUCTOR
See biography on
page 5.

YO-YO MA, CELLO

Yo-Yo Ma's multi-faceted career is testament to his enduring belief in culture's power to generate trust and understanding. Whether performing new or familiar works from the cello repertoire, collaborating with communities and institutions to explore culture's role in society, or engaging unexpected musical forms, Ma strives to foster connections that stimulate the imagination and reinforce our humanity.

Ma maintains a balance between engagements as a soloist with orchestras, recital and chamber music activities, and collaborations with a wide circle of artists and institutions. With partners from around the world and across disciplines, Ma creates programs that stretch the boundaries of genre and tradition to explore music-making as a means not only to share and express meaning, but also as a model for the cultural collaboration he considers essential to a strong society.

Yo-Yo Ma was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris. He began to study the cello with his father at age 4 and three years later moved with his family to New York City, where he continued his cello studies with Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School. After his conservatory training, he sought out a liberal arts education, graduating from Harvard University with a degree in anthropology in 1976.

Ma and his wife have two children. He plays three instruments, a 2003 Moes & Moes cello, made in the United States, a 1733 Montagnana cello from Venice, and the 1712 Davidoff Stradivarius.



JASON BELL

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