

Program Notes

Alexandra Dubois (b. 1981) earned a B.M. at Indiana University, M.M. at the Juilliard School, and a Ph.D. at Stony Brook in New York. In addition to writing for traditional symphonic and chamber mediums, she sometimes incorporates speech, live electronics, and various extra-musical elements. She has received commissions from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Kronos Quartet, Beaux Arts Trio, and Bang on a Can Festival, among others. Her website states that she was born on “undeded [sic] traditional Chesapeake land” (Virginia Beach, VA), moved to rural Virginia, “uceded [sic] traditional land of the Nansemond Nation,” and, at a young age, began hearing the music of the natural world around her. To quote from alexandradubois.com, “Her music aims to be and breathes post-style and as of 2020, belongs to post-style. As an artist, activist, working composer, educator, and academic and administrative officer, she is an advocate for this freedom. She is committed to the simultaneous decolonization of classical music and reclaiming and energizing of classical music through the process of decolonization, awareness, acknowledgement, expansion, and positive change.”

Fanfare on “We Shall Overcome” was commissioned by the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra, which premiered the composition on 2 January 2009. It is tonal with repeated statements or fragments of the theme presented by various instruments punctuated by the timpani. Overall, the fanfare is somber and subdued, but at its conclusion, the work turns to the major key. This music was written prior to the composer’s self-described “post-style” period.

DID YOU KNOW?

“We Shall Overcome” is based on Methodist Episcopal pastor Charles Albert Tindley’s “I’ll Overcome Some Day,” first published in 1901. As early as 1909 it was sung at (secular, mixed-race) meetings of the United Mine Workers. It became the 1945 protest song of striking cigar workers in Charleston, S.C., and eventually part of the civil rights movement in 1959 with a version by Guy Carawan and Pete Seeger.

Born in Dublin, Ireland, **Victor Herbert (1859-1924)** was eight when he moved to Germany, where he eventually became active as a cellist. In 1886 he and his bride, opera singer Therese Förster, moved to the U.S. when Walter Damrosch hired them both at the Metropolitan Opera Company, Therese as a principal singer and Victor as principal cellist. Herbert also taught at the National Conservatory of Music and somehow managed to be a prolific composer, writing over thirty orchestral compositions, two operas and forty-three operettas, works for band and chorus as well as piano and vocal music. He is best known for his Broadway operettas, such as *Babes in Toyland* (1903) and *Naughty Marietta* (1910). After conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony from 1898 to 1904, he founded the Victor Herbert Orchestra, with whom he was associated until his death. As an activist, Herbert’s testimony before Congress helped influence the Copyright Act of 1909. His participation in the founding of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) led to the protection of the rights of songwriters and publishers that is still in effect today.

Herbert acknowledged that the premiere of Dvorák’s “New World” Symphony in 1893 (see next note) influenced his second cello concerto.

Written in 1894, it was immediately popular with the public and has garnered renewed interest in recent decades. (Dvorák subsequently wrote his own cello concerto and credited Herbert with influencing him.) Herbert’s **Cello Concerto No. 2 in E Minor** begins with unison strings playing an impassioned statement that is immediately expanded upon by the soloist. Much of the **Allegro impetuoso** is based on this declamatory theme that helps shape subsequent themes. A quiet bridge leads without pause to the **Andante tranquillo**, signified by a brief passage for a solo oboe. Pulsating strings underscore the ardent cello melody in a major key. An equally fervent theme in the minor key comprises the central section of this second movement. The final **Allegro** begins ominously, but a more light-hearted cello melody intertwines with frolicking woodwinds in a delightful contrapuntal passage. Rapid fingering and bowing by the soloist lead to a joyous conclusion, with one more (cyclical) reiteration of the declamatory theme that started the concerto.

DID YOU KNOW?

Herbert’s *Babes in Toyland* has been remade into countless shows, including a 1934 Laurel & Hardy; a 1960 TV version for the Shirley Temple Show and a Disney film the following year with Ray Bolger and Annette Funicello; a 1986 film with Drew Barrymore and Keanu Reeves; and an animated 1997 film featuring the voices of Christopher Plummer and John Belushi.

Born near Prague, **Antonin Dvorák (1841-1904)** learned his father’s trade, butchering, but also went to Prague Organ School. He played viola in a band, taught privately, and served as a church organist. His lucky break came when Brahms took an interest in his compositions and sent Dvorák’s score for the Moravian

Duets to his own publisher, Simrock, who subsequently commissioned Dvořák's Slavonic Dances (1882). It was this latter composition that made Dvořák an international name. In 1892 he was named Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City in the hope that his expertise would aid the establishment of an independent American school of composition. In a letter back home, Dvořák recognized the daunting task of helping to create a nationalistic music. "They think that if the small Czech nation has musicians of this kind, then why should they not have them too, seeing that their land and nation are so colossal! Please excuse my immodesty, but I am only telling you what the American newspapers are constantly saying! It is certainly a great and noble task for me, and I hope that with God's help I may succeed." He soon became acquainted with Negro spirituals and American folk music, which he incorporated into his well-known **Symphony No. 9, "From the New World,"** the first composition that Dvořák completed in the United States. In another letter dated April 1893, he wrote, "I am just finishing the new E minor symphony, and I am very pleased that it has again turned out different from the earlier ones. It is perhaps turning out rather American!!!" Dvořák was right; the premiere in Carnegie Hall on 15 December 1893 was a triumph. Critics enthused about "a work which marks the beginning of a new musical epoch," and "throbs with American feeling," with "themes founded upon the suggestion of American Negro and Indian melodies." As Dvořák clarified, "It is this spirit which I have tried to reproduce in my new symphony. I have not actually used any of the melodies. I have simply written original themes embodying the peculiarities of the Indian music."

"From the New World" begins with a somber theme in the cellos. There is a hint of the horn motto that will appear more deliberately in the fast-

er **Allegro molto section.** This horn call outlining an E minor arpeggio appears in all four movements. A folk tune for flutes and oboes features a little rhythmic pattern that is reminiscent of "Turkey in the Straw," and a subsequent theme played by solo flute presents a dotted rhythm tune that alludes to "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." This latter theme becomes stormier as the music is developed, and although there are pastoral moments still to come, the first movement ends emphatically.

Brass instruments introduce the **Largo** with seven stately chords in an unexpected chord progression, from E minor to the theoretically remote key of D-flat major. A poignant melody for English horn appears. Although familiar to us today as "Goin' Home," this was not a pre-existing song; the words were added many years later by a former student of the composer. Flutes and oboes present a contrasting theme in the faster middle section. After trombones reiterate the horn motto from the first movement and the English horn solo returns, muted strings quietly conclude the Largo with the "Goin' Home" theme.

Timpani and a clanging triangle introduce the **Scherzo**, which Dvořák indicated is a musical illustration of an Indian feast and dance from The Song of Hiawatha. One requirement of his contract as conservatory director was the composition of an opera based on the lengthy poem, but this movement is the closest he came to fulfilling that obligation. Two contrasting trio themes alternate with the scherzo, resulting in a rondo format (A B A C A B A). Horns reiterate the first movement motto before the end of the movement.

John Williams' famous *Jaws* soundtrack sounds suspiciously like the increasingly agitated string passage at the beginning of the final **Allegro con fuoco.** A noble brass theme is appropriated by the strings, and two additional melodies precede

the return of all the primary themes from the earlier movements, including the slow chord progression that introduces the Largo. There is little wonder why this symphony is a favorite among many Americans.

DID YOU KNOW?

Dvořák revealed that he specifically chose the English horn for the second movement's theme because its timbre reminded him of the voice of Harry Burleigh, an African-American student who frequently sang spirituals for the Czech composer.

©2022 Ruth Ruggles Akers
Dr. Akers has a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from Florida State University.

Guest Artist



Praised by *The Strad* magazine and *The New York Times*, internationally renowned cellist **Amit Peled** is acclaimed as one of the most exciting and virtuosic instrumentalists on the concert stage today. Having performed in many of the world's most prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall at the Lincoln Center in New York, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., Salle Gaveau in Paris, Wigmore Hall in London, and the Konzerthaus Berlin, Peled has released over a dozen recordings on the Naxos, Centaur, Delos, and CTM Classics labels. Musical America named Peled one of the Top 30 Influencers of 2015.

Recent career highlights include Bach Suite cycles in the United States, Europe, and Israel; performances of the Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto at the Kennedy Center; a debut collaboration with the Peabody Chamber Orchestra led by Maestra Marin Alsop; a return to the Ravinia Festival in celebration of Peled's recording of the Brahms Cello Sonatas on the Goffriller cello (1733) once owned by the legendary cellist Pablo Casals; a return visit as a soloist to the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico; performances of the Shostakovich Cello Concerto and Penderecki's Second Cello Concerto conducted by the legendary Krzysztof Penderecki himself; Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata recorded on the Casals cello; and a worldwide

musical celebration of Beethoven's Sonatas for Cello and Piano to commemorate the composer's 250th anniversary.

An enthusiastic chamber music artist, Peled is a member of the acclaimed Tempest Trio with violinist Ilya Kaler and pianist Alon Goldstein. Peled also performs with Goldstein and clarinetist Alexander Fiterstein as a member of the Goldstein-Peled-Fiterstein Trio.

One of the most sought-after cello professors in the world, Peled is a professor at the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University where he has taught since 2003 and was one of the youngest professors ever hired by a major conservatory. He has instructed students who have gone on to garner top prizes at international competitions such as the Carlos Prieto International Competition in Mexico, the Schoenefeld International Competition in China, and Young Concert Artists Guild in New York.

Embracing the new era of the pandemic, Peled recently established the Amit Peled Online Cello Academy in order to reach cellists all over the world with private lessons and in-depth courses on his First Hour technique method.

Passing on the tradition in which he performed with his mentors Bernard Greenhouse and Boris Pergamenschikow, Peled regularly performs with the Amit Peled Cello Gang. Composed of students from Peled's studio at the Peabody Institute, members of the Cello Gang range in age from undergraduate freshmen to second year master's students. Peled and the Cello Gang tour regularly around the country with recent performances at the Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival, the Society of Four Arts in Palm Beach, the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, as a resident ensemble in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and all across Maryland, the gang's home state. Peled is also

the founder, conductor, and artistic director of the Mount Vernon Virtuosi, a chamber orchestra dedicated to nurturing the careers of recently graduated music students, which annually performs a five-program season in Baltimore, Silver Spring, and Rockville, Maryland.

Raised on a kibbutz in Israel, Amit Peled began playing the cello at age 10. From 2012 through 2018, Peled performed on the Pablo Casals 1733 Goffriller cello, which was loaned to him personally by Casals' widow, Marta Casals Istomin.

Amit Peled is represented worldwide by CTM Classics. For more information, visit www.amitpeled.com.

Follow us on
social media



tallahasseesymphony



@tallahasseesymphony



Tallahassee Symphony
Orchestra