

**A New World**  
**Peoria Symphony Orchestra**  
**April 30, 2021**  
**by Michael Allsen • edited by Mae Gilliland Wright**

Our season ends with a program featuring the woodwinds and brass of the Peoria Symphony Orchestra. The opener is one of the most substantial and serious of Mozart's serenades, the *Wind Serenade in C minor*. We then travel back to Venice at the end of the 16th century for two powerful brass ensemble pieces by Giovanni Gabrieli. The program ends with two works by Dvořák—the first an arrangement for brass choir of the lyrical *Largo* movement of his popular “New World” *Symphony*. In the closing work, his *Wind Serenade in D minor*, Dvořák combines the flexible Austrian serenade form with a strong dose of Bohemian flavor.

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**  
***Serenade No. 12 in C minor, K. 388/384a***

*Mozart composed this work in 1782, though its date of first performance is unknown.*  
*Duration 25:00.*

**Background**

Travelers' descriptions of late-18th-century Vienna often remark on one of the Imperial City's most beloved musical traditions, the street serenade. These works are variously titled *Serenade*, *Cassation*, *Notturmo*, or *Nachtmusik*, and were typically played by small ensembles hired to play for a lover, a friend, or a special event. There was also a popular tradition in Vienna of “*Harmoniemusik*”—pieces for wind ensemble. The context for a piece like the C minor *Serenade* heard here is clear enough, but much about the piece itself remains a mystery. Mozart seldom wrote music like this without a specific purpose in mind, but nothing in Mozart's minutely-documented biography suggests why he composed this wind serenade. Its style and form are also unusual. Serenades are usually lightweight collections of several dance-style movements, but this has four sizeable movements and a seriousness of tone that make this, essentially, a small-scale symphony. Mozart valued the piece enough that in 1788, he reworked it as string quintet.

**What You'll Hear**

The serenade, scored for pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns, begins with a substantial movement in sonata form (*Allegro*). The main group of themes begins with a dramatic rising chord from the entire ensemble. The second group, led by the oboe, is much lighter. The development is uncharacteristically long and intense, and Mozart restates even the second group in minor, giving the movement a tragic conclusion. The *Andante* begins with a lyrical clarinet duet that is expanded in the full ensemble. The brief development includes a striking minor-key variation on this theme by the clarinets, and a luminous duet for the horns. As in his symphonies, the third movement is a *Minuet*, but here he sets this courtly dance in severe counterpoint with the opening theme in canon (*Menuetto in canone*). The trio, for oboes and bassoons only, is also in canon—though here, Mozart combines the melody with an inverted (upside-down) version of itself! The last movement (*Allegro*) is a set of variations that are unrelentingly serious until the very end, aside from one pastoral version of the theme for horns and clarinets. In the very last variation, Mozart finally allows a bit of light in, with a cheerful Major-key version of the theme.

**Giovanni Gabrieli (ca.1554-1612)**  
***Sonata pian' e forte***  
***Sonata octavi toni a 12***

*Gabrieli composed both of these works in 1597 or earlier, for use at the basilica of San Marco in Venice. Durations 4:00 and 5:00.*

## Background

The “most serene republic” of Venice was among the political and economic superpowers of the late Renaissance. Music and ceremony were expressions of Venice’s civic pride, particularly the stellar musical establishment at the city’s principal church, the basilica of San Marco. In the decades surrounding the turn of the 17th century, San Marco could boast of one of the finest choirs in Europe. The church also employed a large group of instrumentalists, who played primarily on strings, cornetts (an instrument with a brass-style mouthpiece and a recorder-style body), and trombones. Venetian composers were also masters of the most impressive musical style of the day, “polychoral” writing, in which the texture is divided into two or more contrasting choirs. After witnessing a festival at the basilica in 1611, the English tourist Thomas Coryat wrote that the music at San Marco was “...so good, so delectable, so rare, so admirable, so superexcellent, that it did ravish and stupefy all those strangers who had never heard the like. But how the others were affected by it I know not; for mine own part I can say this, that I was for the time even rapt up with Saint Paul into the third heaven.”

Among the music that ravished and stupefied Coryat was the work of Giovanni Gabrieli, perhaps the finest of the many composers who occupied the organ bench at San Marco in this period. Gabrieli wrote masses and motets for use in the lavish Catholic liturgy at San Marco, but also composed large-scale instrumental pieces for use at the basilica. These impressive works have remained phenomenally popular among modern brass players since performing editions became available in the 1960s.

## What You’ll Hear

Though it would later come to have a more specific meaning, the term *sonata* in Gabrieli’s day was simply a generic name for a piece that was played (*sonare*) on instruments rather than sung. The *Sonata pian’ e forte*, which he published in 1597 as part of a large collection of his vocal and instrumental pieces, is undoubtedly Gabrieli’s most famous instrumental work, and also a kind of landmark in music history. It seems to be the very first piece in which a composer specifies dynamic changes: the *pian’ e forte* of the title. It is also one of the first purely instrumental pieces in which a composer specifies the instrumentation. It is written in eight parts, divided into two choirs. In the original, Gabrieli specifies that one choir should be played by a cornett and three trombones, and the second by a lower-pitched group of violas and three trombones. This solemn work is of course played on modern brass instruments here, but Gabrieli’s original intent comes through clearly: exploiting the contrasting colors of the two choirs, sudden dynamic contrasts, and dramatic echo effects.

The *Sonata octavi toni a 12* (*Sonata in the eighth mode*) was also published in 1597. In this piece there are twelve parts, divided into two equal choirs of six parts each. It has the same dignified character as the *Sonata pian’ e forte*. (These pieces may have been played at San Marco to accompany the most solemn moment in the mass, the elevation of the Host.) However, the four additional parts give this work an even richer texture.

## Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

### ***Largo from the Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 (“From the New World”)*** **arr. David Marlatt**

*Dvořák composed this work in New York in the winter and spring of 1892-93. Anton Seidl conducted the New York Philharmonic in the first performance on December 16, 1893. Duration 5:00.*

## Background

In 1892, Jeannette Thurber made Dvořák an offer he couldn’t refuse. Thurber, the wife of a wealthy New York businessman, had founded the National Conservatory of Music in 1885, and recruited some of the finest teachers in the world to serve on its faculty. Thurber resolved to hire

Dvořák as the director of the Conservatory. He was lukewarm at first, but the terms she offered were very generous: a two-year contract, with very light teaching duties and four months' paid leave each year. The annual salary, \$15,000, was about 25 times what Dvořák was making as an instructor at the Prague Conservatory, and in the end he accepted, eventually spending about three years in America.

The "*New World*" *Symphony* is the most famous of the works Dvořák composed while in America. According to Thurber, the symphony was written at her suggestion. She felt that Dvořák should write a symphony "...embodying his experiences and feelings in America." It was an immediate hit with audiences in both America and Europe. The new symphony closely matched the style of his other late symphonies, a style based upon the German symphonic works of his mentor Brahms, and with occasional hints of Bohemian folk music. There are a few "Americanisms" in the *Symphony No. 9*, however. According to his own account of the work's composition, Dvořák attempted to capture the spirit of American music in the *Symphony No. 9*, and he was particularly interested in two forms of music that had their origins in the United States: Native American music and Black spirituals. Dvořák frequently quizzed one of his students at the National Conservatory, the talented young African American singer Harry T. Burleigh, about spirituals, and he dutifully transcribed every spiritual tune Burleigh knew. His contact with Indigenous American music was a little more tenuous—the only time he ever heard an "authentic" Indigenous American performance was when he went to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show! While he did not quote any true American melodies in the symphony, Dvořák immersed himself in American music and culture, and wrote musical themes from this inspiration.

### **What You'll Hear**

According to Dvořák, the second and third movements were inspired by Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*. The *Largo* evokes *Hiawatha's* "Funeral in the Forest." This movement opens with a solemn chorale, which leads into the main theme, a long romantic melody, set here for the lush sound of a flugelhorn, substituting for the original version's English horn. (This melody became popular as nostalgic song called *Goin' Home*—so popular, in fact, that it was widely assumed that it was a traditional spiritual that Dvořák had quoted!) This arrangement includes a brief contrasting middle passage before a return of the main theme.

### **Antonín Dvořák**

#### ***Serenade in D minor for Winds, Cello and Double Bass, Op. 44***

*Dvořák composed this work in 1878 and conducted the premiere on November 17, 1878 in Prague. Duration 24:00.*

### **Background**

By the mid-1870s, Dvořák was a success in his native Bohemia, and was beginning to look for attention in Vienna, the cosmopolitan capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1874, he applied for and won the Austrian State Stipendium: a substantial grant to artists. He would eventually win the prize four years in a row, and also won the admiration of one of the judges, Vienna's leading composer, Johannes Brahms. Only eight years older than Dvořák, Brahms would become a close friend, mentor, and a strong champion of Dvořák's music in Vienna and beyond. In 1877, Brahms pressured his publisher, Simrock, to publish one of Dvořák's Stipendium submissions, the *Moravian Duets*, a set of vocal pieces. Simrock published the duets and was impressed enough to offer Dvořák a commission for a newly-composed set of dances for piano duet—the eight *Slavonic Dances* were original compositions that used the varied and unique dance rhythms he had grown up with in Bohemia. They were instantly popular, and Simrock quickly paid Dvořák to prepare orchestral versions of the dances.

The *Serenade for Winds* comes from this period of increasing fame. Though it is unclear whether he had a particular event in mind for the work, he apparently composed it with relative ease and efficiency: he completed the score in the space of just ten days in January 1878. This was familiar ground for Dvořák—he had composed his successful *Serenade for Strings* just a few years earlier. But here the scoring—paired oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, contrabassoon, three horns, cello, and bass—allows for a great variety of timbres and “orchestral” effects. Brahms, who saw the score later, was obviously impressed, and wrote to his friend Joseph Joachim: “Take a look at Dvořák’s *Serenade for Wind Instruments*; I hope you will enjoy it as much as I do... It would be difficult to discover a finer, more refreshing impression of really abundant and charming creative talent. Have it played to you; I feel sure the players will enjoy doing it!”

### **What You’ll Hear**

The opening movement (*Moderato, quasi marcia*) begins with a stern march, though a rather comical answer from the bassoons and contrabassoon seems to hint that it’s not to be taken too seriously. The contrasting music is light and pastoral, in a distinctly Bohemian style. Though Dvořák titles the second movement *Minuet* after the old French courtly dance, the outer sections are clearly inspired by the same Czech folk rhythms as the contemporary *Slavonic Dances*. He channels another Bohemian dance—the more energetic *Furiant*—in the middle section. The slow movement (*Andante con moto*) unfolds in a relaxed way; aside from a brief moment of turbulence at the midpoint, this is a series of beautiful solo melodies, often played above a gentle horn background. The main theme of the finale (*Allegro molto*) is all bustling energy, and Dvořák provides a bumptious Bohemian countermelody as contrast. After a short development section, there is reminiscence of the march from the first movement before a brilliant *coda*.