Program Notes

Irving Berlin - A Symphonic Portrait **Irving Berlin, arr. Hawley Ades**

Irving Berlin (1888–1989) was one of America's greatest songwriters. With over 1,500 songs to his credit, he gave the world timeless classics that defined Broadway, Hollywood, and the American spirit for more than half a century. This vibrant symphonic portrait, skillfully arranged for concert band by Hawley Ades, weaves together a medley of some of Berlin's most beloved melodies into a single, engaging work lasting approximately six minutes.

The piece opens energetically with the show-stopping **"There's No Business Like Show Business"** and includes sparkling renditions of **"Say It with Music," "Alexander's Ragtime Band,"** and the joyful **"Easter Parade."** It then shifts to a warmer, more nostalgic mood with the holiday favorite **"White Christmas,"** before building to a stirring and patriotic close with **"God Bless America."**

Hawley Ades' arrangement brings Berlin's iconic tunes to life with colorful orchestration, lyrical brass chorales, and lively woodwind and percussion writing that captures the ragtime energy, romantic charm, and heartfelt patriotism that made Berlin's music so universally appealing. Whether performed by community bands or professional ensembles, *Irving Berlin – A Symphonic Portrait* is a crowd-pleasing tribute to the man who, more than any other, provided the soundtrack to 20th-century American life. It remains a favorite encore or light-classical selection that celebrates the enduring power of Berlin's melodies.

American Salute **Morton Gould**

Morton Gould (1913-1996) composed *American Salute* in a single night in 1942, at the height of World War II. Drawing upon the Civil War tune "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," he created an orchestral showpiece brimming with rhythmic vitality and patriotic energy. Bright, brassy colors turn the old march into newly exhilarating music that honors the courage and perseverance of those serving abroad and anticipates the celebration of their return.

"How to Start a War with a Giant" **Jack Curran**

Once, the kingdom of Mylamark flourished in peace upon the magical plains of Azkebahr. But one cloudy day, thunderous footsepts shook the earth. A lost giant wandered blindly, his head swallowed by low-hanging clouds – unaware he was drifting toward Mylamark.

Terrified, the people fired their mightiest cannon. The blast struck his chest. Startled and enraged, the giant fled to his homeland of Unfarkill. The kingdom rejoiced – streets alive with music and dancing, certain the danger had passed. But that night, as they slept in proud slumber, the footsteps returned – closer, louder, unstoppable. And this time, the giant knew exactly where he was going. He tore through Mylamark with furious strength, leaving only ruins where a kingdom once stood.

They paid the price when they saw a monster – and made one. ~ *note by Jack Curran*

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John Henry **Aaron Copland**

Aaron Copland was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 14, 1900, the youngest of five children. His parents, Harris Morris Copland and Sarah Mittenthal Copland, were Jewish immigrants, and his earliest musical training came from his older sister Laurine, who taught him piano. He later began formal lessons with Leopold Wolfsohn and started composing as a teenager. Copland would go on to become one of the most important American composers of the twentieth century. Among his best-known works are *Appalachian Spring*, *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and *Lincoln Portrait*. Much of Copland's music came to be associated with an American sound, especially through its openness, clarity, and connection to national identity. Unfortunately, in 1990, Copland would die due to respiratory failure brought on by pneumonia. In addition to some of his most famous tunes, Copland also composed a lesser-known piece called *John Henry*.

John Henry was composed in 1940 and was originally intended for radio broadcast on CBS's "School of the Air." It is considered a program piece, meaning a piece of music composed to convey a particular idea or recreate a particular story or poem, rather than existing simply for its own sake. The story of John Henry centers on an American folk legend that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Following the end of the Civil War, John Henry, a freed African American, worked as a railroad laborer. According to the legend, while laying rail and hammering spikes one day, a new machine arrives at the work site. The workers are told that the pile-driving machine will replace them because it can work faster than any human.

John Henry, being the persevering man that he is, decides to challenge the machine to a race to see who can lay more railroad faster. As the race begins, Henry struggles to keep up. He briefly collapses from exhaustion, but after encouragement from his wife and the addition of an extra hammer, he gets back up and begins hammering again, only this time even faster. He starts to catch up to the machine until the two are neck and neck. As both Henry and the machine approach a wall of earth, Henry notices that the machine does not stop. He decides to keep hammering, and the two force their way through the side of a hill. After several minutes, the other railroad workers wait on the far side to see who will emerge victorious. Soon, they hear and feel a rumble in the ground. John Henry bursts through the hill with his hammers raised high in victory.

It is a glorious moment; however, due to the strain the race placed on his body, Henry dies from the stress on his heart. While his story ends tragically, its message is clear: humans are resilient and will fight through struggle to prove that they cannot easily be replaced by a machine. To convey these ideas in a musical context, Copland utilizes several percussive elements. One example is the use of an anvil to replicate the sound of Henry's hammer and the machine's pile-driver. The piece also calls for sandpaper to be rubbed together to create the effect of a train chugging along. Copland's *John Henry* creates a thrilling atmosphere that rises in tension as the piece develops. It serves as a strong example of Copland's ability to bring an American legend to life through music. ~ *note by Alex Eby*

Program Notes

Lullaby **Elyse Kahler**

Lullaby for Orchestra is arranged from a handbell choir piece (2009). Textural layers build on top of each other to build to a full orchestral moment, like when you're almost asleep and something startles you awake. The drawing out of the melody at the end of the piece is meant to represent finally drifting off into slumber. ~*program note by Elyse Kahler*

Symphony No. 9 "From the New World" **Antonin Dvořák**

Few works in the symphonic repertoire capture a sense of wonder, nostalgia, and cultural crossroads as powerfully as Antonín Dvořák's *Symphony No. 9 "From the New World."* Written during the composer's stay in the United States, it is both a love letter to America and a deeply Czech declaration of identity. Its subtitle, *Z nového světa*, perfectly reflects the dual perspective of an immigrant experiencing a vast new continent while never forgetting his homeland.

Historical Context

In 1892, Dvořák accepted an invitation from Jeannette Thurber to become director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. He arrived with his family the following year, hoping to help create a distinctly American school of classical music. Dvořák was fascinated by what he heard: African-American spirituals sung by his student Harry T. Burleigh, the rhythms and melodies of Native American music, and the energy of a young, rapidly expanding nation. He encouraged American composers to draw from these "native" sources rather than merely imitating European models.

Yet the symphony he produced is no simple pastiche of American folk tunes. It is thoroughly Dvořákian—lyrical, structurally masterful, and suffused with the spirit of Bohemian folk music—while incorporating the pentatonic scales, syncopations, and open harmonies that evoked the American landscape for him.

The work was premiered on December 16, 1893, by the New York Philharmonic under Anton Seidl to enormous acclaim. Within months it had traveled back to Europe, where audiences recognized it immediately as one of the great symphonies of the age.

The Music

First Movement: Adagio – Allegro molto

The symphony opens with a solemn, dark-hued introduction in the low strings and brass, establishing a sense of vast space and anticipation. When the main Allegro bursts forth, it does so with driving energy and a striking main theme built on a falling pentatonic figure. A second, more lyrical theme (often described as having a "plantation song" character) appears in the relative major. The development section is stormy and dramatic, and the movement ends with a triumphant, almost defiant coda.

Second Movement: Largo
This is the symphony's emotional heart and one of the most famous slow movements ever written. A poignant, hymn-like melody is first heard on the English horn, accompanied by muted strings—an unforgettable sound that seems to float across a wide prairie or evoke the quiet sorrow of a spiritual. Dvořák later told friends the music suggested the homesickness of a homesick traveler (or, in some accounts, the lament of Hiawatha from Longfellow's poem, which the composer greatly admired). In 1922, William Arms Fisher added words to this melody, creating the enduring spiritual "Goin' Home." The movement's central section offers a brief contrast before the English horn returns, now even more touching in its simplicity.

Third Movement: Scherzo (Molto vivace)
A bustling, dance-like movement full of Czech furiant rhythms and playful woodwind writing. The main theme has a skipping, almost woodland quality, while the trio section brings a gentler, more songful contrast. Dvořák reportedly drew inspiration here from the dance of Native Americans he observed, filtered through his own Central European sensibility.

Fourth Movement: Allegro con fuoco
The finale opens with a bold, march-like theme in the horns and trumpets. It then introduces a broad, singing second subject. Throughout the movement Dvořák cleverly recalls themes from the first and second movements, creating a cyclical structure that unifies the entire symphony. The closing pages are exhilarating, with the full orchestra driving toward a blazing E-major conclusion that feels like a triumphant arrival after a long journey.

Legacy
Dvořák's "New World" Symphony stands as a landmark of late-Romantic music. It proved that a European composer could embrace American sounds without losing his own voice, and it inspired generations of American composers (Copland, Gershwin, and many others) to seek their own national idiom. At the same time, it remains quintessentially Czech in its warmth, melodic generosity, and emotional directness.

More than 130 years after its premiere, the symphony still speaks with remarkable freshness. Whether evoking the bustle of 1890s New York, the open skies of the American Midwest, or the quiet longing for home that every traveler knows, Dvořák's Ninth continues to feel like music that belongs both everywhere and nowhere—truly music "from the New World."