



## Legato in Times of Staccato

### Playlist 12 - Wednesday, June 24th, 2020

Curated by Music Director, Fouad Fakhouri

#### [William Dawson: Negro Folk Symphony](#)

William Dawson was a renowned African American composer, choir director, and professor who incorporated African American themes and melodies into his music. With the Negro Folk Symphony, Dawson aimed to “write a symphony in the Negro folk idiom, based on authentic folk music but in the same symphonic form used by the composers of the [European] romantic-nationalist school.” The work consists of three movements, each with its own programmatic subtitle.

#### [Dvorak: Serenade for Strings & Wind](#)

Dvořák composed his entire Serenade in E major for string orchestra in less than two weeks in May 1875. The piece is in five movements, and in the finale, the main theme from the first movement is quoted before the coda, effectively unifying the work. Overall, the piece is light and carefree, reflecting a happy and productive time in Dvořák’s life.

The Serenade in D minor for wind instruments was also composed in just two weeks in January 1878. The winds play atop a foundation of cello and string bass, and like in the Serenade for Strings, the opening theme is quoted in the final movement to unify the piece. The work is Classical in form but Czech in character as Dvořák incorporated folk melodies and rhythms from his native Bohemian culture. The piece was dedicated to music critic Louis Ehlert who promoted Dvořák’s famous Slavonic Dances and helped to advance Dvořák’s musical career.

#### [Haydn: Cello Concerto No. 1](#)

Haydn’s Cello Concerto No. 1 was lost for almost two centuries until an archivist of the Prague National Museum uncovered a set of parts for the piece in 1961. The C major concerto is an early work, written during Haydn’s first four years working for the Esterházy family, when he often composed for certain musicians he favored. This concerto was written for Joseph Weigl, a good friend of Haydn’s and the principal cellist in Haydn’s orchestra from 1761-1768.

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### Maurice Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé Suite No. 2

In 1928, Maurice Ravel wrote: “I was commissioned by the director of the Russian Ballet to write Daphnis et Chloé, a choreographic symphony in three movements. My aim in writing it was to compose a vast musical fresco... The work is constructed like a symphony, with a very strict system of tonality, formed out of a small number of themes whose development assures homogeneity to the work.” As a ballet, Daphnis received a lukewarm reception at its premiere, however, Ravel’s score was highly praised. Igor Stravinsky called the work “one of the most beautiful products of French music” for its colorful orchestration and dream-like qualities. Ravel extracted two suites from the ballet, the Second Suite comprised mostly of sections involving celebration.

### John Adams: Harmonielehre

John Adams wrote Harmonielehre through inspiration of a dream. In his autobiography, Adams wrote:

“As what seemed like the absolute nadir of my creative block, I’d had a vivid dream in which I was crossing the San Francisco Bay Bridge. In that dream I looked out to see a huge oil tanker sitting in the water. As I watched, it slowly rose up like a Saturn rocket and blasted out of the bay and into the sky. I could see the rust-colored metal oxide of its hull as it took off. Shortly after, possibly the very next day, I sat down in my studio to find, almost as if they were waiting for me, the powerful pounding E-minor chords that launch the piece. From there it proceeded to take shape with great speed, almost as if the floodgates had been opened and nearly two years of pent up energy and ideas came rushing forth.”

John Adams use of the title Harmonielehre, which in German translates to “study of harmony”, is a reference to a dissertation by Arnold Schoenberg in dedication of Gustav Mahler who had died that same year. The piece is heavily influenced by many great composers such as: Mahler, Sibelius, Debussy and Schoenberg, which you can hear throughout each movement.

### Haydn: Symphony No. 45 in F sharp minor "Farewell"

In 1772, Haydn had been employed as a “Royal Conductor” for Prince Nikolaus Esterházy and had taken temporary residence at the castle. After an exceedingly long season, the musicians and Haydn were overdue to return home to their families. However, the Prince insisted they stay longer to perform a new symphony. With the musicians in mind, Haydn wrote “Farewell”, to include a special ending. During the



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last movement of the piece, Haydn adds an “unexpected pause” to begin an Adagio. Musicians after musician would finish their part and blow out his candle and leave the stage. To Haydn, this piece was kind of a “musical protest” to convince the Prince to allow all the musicians to return home. According to history, the Prince allowed the musicians to return to their families the following day.

### Grieg: Peer Gynt Suite

In 1867, Henrik Ibsen wrote his five-act drama Peer Gynt, which tells the story of the downfall and redemption of a Norwegian peasant anti-hero. The drama was originally not intended for stage performance, however, in 1874, Ibsen changed his mind and asked his dear friend Edvard Grieg to compose the music for the production of the play. The task was especially difficult for Grieg at first, for he could not understand the drama, but the more he read, the more he was able to complete the piece in time for the premier in the autumn of 1875.

### Prokofiev: Toccata

Derived from the Italian word “toccare”, which translates to “to touch”, toccata is the “action of touching”. Toccata is a virtuoso piece of music that is typically for keyboard instruments including piano and organ but, can also be played by plucked string instruments. This form of music features light, fast-moving movements, to highlight the dexterity of the performer’s fingers. Many great composers such as Ravel, Schumann, Bach, and Khachaturian have also written Toccata, but Prokofiev’s Toccata in D minor, Op. 11 is one of the most difficult piano solos.

### Mozart: Symphony No. 40

Mozart had composed his last three symphonies (39, 40, and 41) in the summer of 1788. It had been a very difficult and trying summer for Mozart, for he was losing audience interest in his concerts and he had just lost his infant daughter, Theresia. Despite the joyous and bright sounds of Symphonies 39 and 41, Symphony No. 40 was written in a minor key to reflect “Sturm und Drang” (Storm and Stress) to simulate darker and stronger emotions. It is likely these three symphonies were composed for a concert series, but it is still unknown whether the concerts took place, and if Mozart was even able to hear the symphonies be performed before his death in 1791.



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### Torke: Green Music

The color green implies a sense of “inexperienced freshness”, something that is “unseasoned and youthful”. For Torke, the color green is associated with the key of E major and is very energetic. This piece is monothematic, which means having a dominating “theme” throughout the piece. In Green this simple melodic theme is (F#-A-D#-E-B), with varied speed, rhythms, and dispositions.

### Rouse: Trombone Concerto

This work was commissioned in 1991 by the New York Philharmonic for principal trombonist- Joseph Alessi, in honor of the NYP 150<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. The third movement is a memorial to Leonard Bernstein, to what Christopher Rouse quotes “the ‘Credo’ theme from his Symphony No. 3 ‘Kaddish’ a gesture of the most profound affection and gratitude, mingled with sorrow at his passing.” In 1993, Trombone Concerto was awarded a Pulitzer prize for music.

**\*\*\*To access the full Spotify playlist for week 12, click [here!](#)\*\*\***