

Chapel Hill

Philharmonia

Saturday, 19 October 2019
3:00 p.m.

Moeser Auditorium
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Evan Feldman, Guest
Conductor

Dances from the Old and New World

National Anthem

Slavonic Dance, Op. 46 #1

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

An der schönen blauen Donau

Johann Strauss Jr (1825-1899)

Finale from Symphony No. 9 in E Minor

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

Mystery Pieces (???)

Stacey Berk (b. 1970)

Chapel Hill Fantasia

James Larkins (b. 1999)

World Premiere

Fugue in G Minor

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)/arr. Caillet

Danzón No. 2

Arturo Márquez (b. 1950)

At the end of the concert we invite young people to take turns leading the orchestra in music from the films Harry Potter and Star Wars.

This program is supported by the Orange County Arts Commission.



ORANGE COUNTY ARTS
COMMISSION

Dances from the Old and New World

Our concert opens and closes with dances; two from the Old World at the start, and one from the New World at the end. In between are other works old and new: a Baroque fugue, the finale from a late Romantic symphony, and two contemporary works, one brand new. After our program, we invite young people in the audience to wield the baton in music from Harry Potter and Star Wars.

Dvořák: Slavonic Dance, Op. 46 #1

In 1874, Antonin Dvořák, 33, was a church organist, struggling to support a wife and three children and still find time to compose music. He applied for an Austrian government grant in support of “impoverished” artists, submitting a big sheaf of compositions, including his first two symphonies. The jury — including the leading Viennese critic, the director of the opera, and Johannes Brahms — awarded Dvořák the grant. Brahms was much impressed by what he saw.

Three years later, when Dvořák won the grant again, Brahms recommended him to his publisher Simrock, who published a set of duets for high voices in Moravian folk style that were part of the grant submission. Simrock told Dvořák that if he wrote something like Brahms’s Hungarian Dances, he’d gladly consider publishing it.



Dvořák sent eight pieces for piano four-hands, in Slavic folk dance style. Delighted, Simrock insisted that they be orchestrated; that version was published in 1878. Both versions were best sellers for Simrock, and they made Dvořák’s name widely known in Europe.

The first of the set is a *Furiant*, a fast dance in alternating triple and duple rhythms. The triple part has strong accents, especially on the third beats, while the duple part swings more gently. Dvořák uses as a unit two bars in very fast 3/4 time: three pairs of quarter notes give the triple rhythm, while two sets of three give the duple rhythm. The first two themes illustrate this alternation of rhythm and character [from the piano version]:

Presto.

Strauss: An der schönen blauen Donau (On the beautiful blue Danube)

When he wrote this most famous of all Viennese waltzes in 1866, Johann Strauss Jr had achieved success far beyond that of his late father. He was *Hofballmusikdirektor* (Director of Imperial Balls), he had a famous orchestra that played nearly every night in ballrooms and casinos, and he had written almost a hundred waltzes, many them quite popular. But 1866 was a bad year for gaiety. Austria had lost a seven-week war with Prussia, ending its influence in much of what subsequently became a unified Germany. As a result, most of the balls were canceled. Strauss had new music, but nowhere to play it.

He had been asked a year earlier to write a concert piece for the Viennese Men's Choral Society. So he took up that commission and wrote a set of waltzes, some to be sung by the men of the society to words supplied by one of the members. At the last minute Strauss added a title, from a poem he had enjoyed about the Danube — which has never run blue, of course.



Strauss statue, Vienna Stadtpark

The title has nothing to do with the words, which are satirical about the lost war. The opening lines, sung to the first waltz: *Wiener seid's froh!! Oho! Wieso?* (Viennese be happy! / Oho! How so?) The first performances were, by Strauss's standards, received poorly, so he decided to junk the words and produce a version for orchestra alone. That version is usually performed, although verses added later about the "blue Danube" are sometimes sung in Austria.

With the words gone and a piano reduction prepared, the work became sensationally successful, so much so that the publisher had to order a second set of engraved printing plates. Decades later, in a family outing with Brahms, Strauss's stepdaughter asked the great man to autograph her fan. He complied, sketching the first bars of the Blue Danube, and adding "Unfortunately not by J. Brahms."

A "closed position" dance (the bodies touch occasionally between the chest and the knees), the waltz was regarded as a scandalous low class activity in the 1700s. But it often happens that low art, properly tamed, becomes high art. By the mid-19th century the waltz was the favorite dance of polite European society, especially in the Austrian empire.

The Viennese version of the dance uses a strong first beat, a second beat a bit early, and a softer third beat. In concert waltzes such as the Blue Danube, there is an introductory section, then the waltzes with many repeats, ending with an extended coda.

Dvořák: Finale from Symphony No. 9 in E Minor (“From the New World”)

We continue with the final movement from Dvořák’s final symphony. [Please join us at our next concert on 15 December, when we will play the entire symphony.]

In September 1892 Dvořák arrived in New York to become the director of the newly established National Conservatory of Music. In the following spring he wrote a new symphony (which Simrock agreed to publish for the rather high fee Dvořák demanded). He was asked by Anton Seidl, director of the New York Philharmonic, to let his orchestra present the premiere, to which Dvořák agreed. Just before he delivered the score to Seidl, he wrote (in Czech) on the title page: “From the New World”.

The question of whether the symphony is also “of the New World”, i.e., how “American” it is in content, has surrounded it ever since. In a letter to a friend back home, Dvořák wrote: “I am now just finishing my E minor symphony. I take great pleasure in it and it will differ considerably from my others. Well, the *influence* of America must be felt by anyone who has any ‘nose’ at all.” But after the triumphant premiere he was a bit amused by commentary about how he had created “a new American music”, saying that perhaps he had “confused” the American public, but the people “back home” will understand.

In any case, the finale’s themes are distinctly Bohemian. A heroic first theme is followed by a bucolic second section. In the development echoes are heard of the themes of the earlier movements; these return again in the coda, leading to an exultant close in E major. The final chord dies away in the winds, in what the score describes as a “long corona”.

Berk: Two movements from Avian Suite

[Notes from the publisher’s catalog, presumably by the composer.]

In *Avian Suite*, the colorful timbres and techniques available in the instruments of the orchestra are utilized to capture characteristics of five contrasting birds.

The open intervals and melodic embellishments of *Eagle* lend a Native American feel to the introduction. This carries the listener to the magnificent open plains where the music gradually swells into a soaring theme before returning to rest at the end.

Chickadee is the most literal translation of birdsong in the suite, with “chick-a-dee-dee-dees” and “phoe-bes” used as motivic material. In addition, the movement attempts to capture the perky, inquisitive nature of the little bird.

Stacey Berk is an oboist and professor of music at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. She performs in orchestras in central Wisconsin. Her compositions have been performed in cities across the country, and she has received numerous commissions. Her compositions often have programmatic or literary backgrounds.



Larkins: Chapel Hill Fantasia

Building on a program created by Prof. Alejandro Rutty of UNC-G to encourage young music students to try their hands at composition, William Slechta's students at West Cary Middle School were asked to devise a melodic theme. James Larkins then used this theme to compose the work we play — in its world premiere.

William Slechta is a long-time violinist and violist in our orchestra, who also does valuable service for us as librarian and stage manager.

Here are notes about the work, by the composer:

Chapel Hill Fantasia is based upon a theme originally written by the music students of West Cary Beginning

Strings and orchestrated by James R. Larkins. The original melody in D major opens up to a world of color as the orchestra is stretched and the theme evolves into a variety of shapes. The focus here is exploiting the numerous possible ways for the same melody to be realized in the orchestra, from a brass chorale to a woodwind feature and everything in between. At one point, the beginning of Gustav Mahler's first symphony is utilized as a starting point for the melody to be reintroduced in yet another guise. After this, the orchestra builds up to a monstrous tutti before the explosive ending to the piece.

Bach: Fugue in G Minor, BWV 578 (arr. Caillet)

This well known organ work — called "Little G Minor" to distinguish it from a longer work in that key, BWV 542 — was written when Bach, about 20 years old, was working in Arnstadt. His appointment in 1703 at a church with a new organ that used modern tuning was ideal for his exploration of composition in a variety of keys. Unfortunately, in 1706 he offended his employer when he used a four week leave traveling (280 miles by foot!) to visit the famous organist Dieterich Buxtehude — and then stayed away for four months. So Bach moved on, to a better job in Mülhausen.

Here are the first six bars of the fugue, in the original version for organ:

Manual

Pedal

James Larkins is a Kenan Scholar at UNC-CH, in the class of 2022. He is from Fayetteville, and studied cello before becoming interested in composition. While at the NC School of Science and Mathematics, he studied music theory with Scott Laird and Philip Riggs. Currently he studies composition with Allen Anderson and cello with Brent Wissick.



The first four bars present the main subject, beginning on G; at bar six the second statement begins in the left hand on D, four notes below the first statement. A subsequent statement later begins on G again, and so forth. (These repetitions at intervals of fourths or fifths is what makes the piece a fugue.) The separate strains are intertwined contrapuntally, as the music becomes more and more complex. A final statement of the subject on G leads to a sudden happy ending in a G major chord, as was the style at the time for pieces written in the minor mode.

In the orchestral arrangement by Lucien Caillet, the various entrances are by various parts of the orchestra (starting with a solo clarinet), so the effect is a sort of guide to the orchestra as well as a piece of great music.

Márquez: Danzón No. 2

The *Danzón* is a hybrid dance, originating in Cuba and also popular in Mexico and Puerto Rico. Its roots include the European contradance and the syncopated rhythms of the African slaves of the Caribbean colonies. Its immediate predecessor is the *Habanera*, the contradance of Havana. In Mexico it is a formal dance, slow but with up-tempo sections, similar to the *Tango*. The basic rhythmic pattern is: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ |.

Typically the melodies are in the minor mode.

As with the waltz, in its early forms the *Danzón* was regarded as low class, scandalous if danced by respectable people. Now it is seen as a dance mainly for the older generations, or for formal occasions.

We play the second of nine *Danzones* by Arturo Márquez. It is a concert piece for large orchestra, although ballet companies have choreographed it. In recent years it has been a popular item in concert programs. It was played by the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, in their celebrated 2007 international tour.

Williams: Music from Harry Potter and Star Wars

We invite the young people in the audience to come to the podium, take the baton, and lead us (each for a brief time) in the background music from the popular films, by the well-known Hollywood composer John Williams.

Arturo Márquez was born in Álamos, Sonora, Mexico. Through his grandfather (a folk musician) and his father (a *mariachi* player), he was exposed to several musical styles. He started composing at age 16, and then attended the Mexican Music Conservatory. His music incorporates forms and styles of his native country. The *Danzones* are based on the music of the Veracruz region, on the Gulf coast.

