

PROGRAM NOTES FOR NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
2022-2023 Centennial Gala Concert - 12 November 2022
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Jazz superstar **Wynton Marsalis** is equally at home in the worlds of big band jazz, bebop, gospel, Afro-Caribbean, and classical music. Initially known as a virtuoso trumpeter, he has branched out to teaching and composition, promoting both jazz and classical music to audiences of all ages. His *Herald, Holler and Hallelujah: Fanfare for Brass and Percussion* was a New Jersey Symphony commission and had its world premiere here at NJPAC last January. This six-minute movement is exuberant and celebratory. Marsalis shows his mastery of multiple styles, flirting with unorthodox harmonies that stretch our ears – and injecting moments of humor. He floats in and out of marching band, big band, and jazz, all the while demonstrating his profound knowledge of brass and percussion.

Antonín Dvořák was a blazing star of the late Romantic era and a staunch nationalist who celebrated his Bohemian heritage in his music. One of his best loved works is the superb **Cello Concerto in B minor, Op.104**. Inspired in part by Victor Herbert's Second Cello Concerto, which Dvořák had heard in New York City, this is the crown jewel of the instrument's literature. It was also the culmination of Dvořák's visit to America. The great cellist Pablo Casals called this concerto "Dvořák's Tenth Symphony." Indeed, the orchestra is more a symphonic partner than it is an accompanist to the cello soloist. The soloist's role is magical, benefitting from an expert balance of the cello's sound with full orchestra. Dvořák quotes from one of his own songs in the heartfelt *Adagio ma non troppo*. In the finale, attentive listeners will hear allusions to the earlier movements. Throughout, passionate themes and vigorous rhythms make the Cello

Concerto an unforgettable musical experience.

Alberto Ginastera was an Argentinian nationalist – but also a citizen of the world. Born and educated in Buenos Aires, Ginastera later studied with Aaron Copland in this country, and attended many European music festivals featuring his music in the 1950s. The **Three Dances** are from an early ballet, *Estancia* (1941) written for Lincoln Kirstein and the American Ballet Caravan. Ginastera’s orchestral suite, comprising four dances in its complete version, was first performed in 1943. The word *estancia* means ranch, and each movement depicts an aspect of farm life on the Argentinian *pampas*. The subtitles of the selections we hear are self-explanatory: “The Land Workers,” “Wheat Dance,” and “Final Dance: *Malambo*.” *Malambo* is a dance tournament between two gauchos – ranch cowboys. Ginastera’s *Malambo* is a thriller, building at a fierce pace to a splendid, flashy close.

Herald, Holler and Hallelujah: Fanfare for Brass and Percussion

Wynton Marsalis

Born 18 October 1961 in New Orleans

Approximate duration 6 minutes

Composed 2021

First performance January 2022 here at NJPAC

Jazz superstar Wynton Marsalis is equally at home in the worlds of big band jazz, bebop, gospel, Afro-Caribbean, and classical music. Initially known as a virtuoso trumpeter, he has branched out to teaching and composition, promoting both jazz and classical music to audiences of all ages. Marsalis began recording his original compositions in the 1980s with his various jazz ensembles. Since the 1990s he has expanded his composition diaspora, writing – among other works – *The Octoroon Balls* for string quartet; ballet scores for choreographers Peter Martins, Twyla Tharp, and Judith Jamison; a Violin Concerto for Nicola Benedetti, and four symphonies. In 1997, Marsalis became the first jazz composer to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for *Blood on the Fields*.

Since then he has regularly fused classical and jazz elements in his compositions, notably a fine violin concerto for the Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti.

The New Jersey Symphony was the lead commissioner for Marsalis's *Herald, Holler and Hallelujah*, a fanfare for brass and percussion, and presented its world premiere last January.

Over the course of six minutes, Marsalis shows his mastery of multiple styles, flirting with unorthodox harmonies that stretch our ears, and injecting moments of humor. He floats in and out of marching band, big band, and jazz, all the while demonstrating his profound knowledge of brass and percussion. The overall effect is one of exuberance and celebration.

Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra in B minor, Op.104

Antonín Dvořák

Born 8 September, 1841 in Mühlhausen, Bohemia

Died 1 May, 1904 in Prague, Czechoslovakia

Approximate duration 40 minutes

Composed November 1894 to June 1895

First performance 19 March 1896 in London. Leo Stern was the soloist; the composer conducted the London Philharmonic

Instrumentation: woodwinds in pairs plus piccolo, three horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle (in the finale only), solo cello and strings.

Dvořák and the concerto

Dvořák was a brilliant symphonist, a champion of absolute music in an era when the symphonic poem with an extramusical programme carried great sway. His most lasting contribution was in the realm of orchestral and chamber music, which makes him a Bohemian analogue to his mentor and friend Johannes Brahms in Vienna. But for some reason, unlike Brahms, Dvořák achieved little resonance in the realm of the concerto. He tried his hand at both piano and violin concertos, and produced serviceable works that have their memorable moments. While both those compositions -- the Piano Concerto, Op.33 (1876) and the Violin Concerto, Op.53 (1880) -- are performed occasionally and deserve to be heard, neither work is first rank Dvořák.

The late Cello Concerto we hear this weekend, however, is an entirely different story. This piece prompted no less a critic than Brahms, when he first examined the score, to exclaim:

"Why on earth didn't I know that one could write a violoncello concerto like this? If I had only known, I would have written one long ago!" Op.104 in B-minor crowns Dvořák's concerto production, and remains one of the glories of the literature. His obvious confidence in solo writing clearly developed with great strides through the piano and violin concertos that preceded it; this work is the harvest.

Oddly enough, Dvořák considered cello to be an inappropriate solo instrument. He perceived its upper register as strained, even nasal, and its lower register gruff. While he favored the cello in orchestral and chamber music, he was disinclined to write a work featuring it. The eminent Czech cellist Hanuš Wihan, his inspiration and eventual dedicatee, succeeded in changing his mind – but not without hiccups [see sidebar].

American precedent?

Another factor that may have influenced his decision to take on the project was a concert in New York City in 1894. Dvořák's friend, the Irish-American cellist and composer Victor Herbert (1859-1924), performed his Second Cello Concerto. The Czech composer was so moved by Herbert's artistry, and so challenged by the possibilities of the instrument, that he set to work on his own concerto. Perhaps because it was the sole work Dvořák completed during that final year in America, Op. 104 is generally grouped with Dvořák's "American" works. Actually it is far more closely allied to his Bohemian roots, filled with the spirit and rhythms of his beloved Bohemian homeland.

Though the overall concept is symphonic, the prominent solo role, aggressive and fluid

from the start, integrates quite satisfactorily with the larger orchestral entity. The first movement is rich in melodies, distributed generously throughout the orchestra but focused in the woodwinds. Clarinets declaim the main theme in the orchestral exposition. The second theme is one of the French horn's most soaringly lyrical moments in 19th-century orchestral literature. After their initial statement, the horns cede to clarinet and oboe. Eventually, of course, the soloist has his way with most of the melodic material. This opening Allegro is one of the triumphs of Dvořák's maturity.

Autobiographical subtext: an early love

More than anywhere else, the Czech flavor of this dramatic concerto sails forth in the slow movement. While working on the piece on his second trip to the United States in 1894, Dvořák learned that his sister-in-law Josefina Kaunitzova was ill. She had been a youthful love of his, and he retained a strong affection for her. She was quite fond of his song "Let me wander alone with my dreams" (Op. 82, No.1), and he incorporated it into the *Adagio ma non troppo*. This movement's exceptionally rich melodic material also includes a noteworthy duet for oboe and the soloist, plus a lovely flute solo.

Following Dvořák's return to his homeland in May 1895, Josefina died. At that point he undertook the revision of the Finale, incorporating the song an additional time into the Coda. He encountered resistance from his intended soloist, squabbling with Wihan, who wished to add a cadenza [see sidebar]. The composer won the battle, resisting Wihan's interference. He was adamantly opposed to the cadenza, and allowed only minor alterations the cellist suggested in the first movement. Instead, he lent the last 60 measures of the finale the ineffable quality of

resignation that is one of the concerto's most distinguishing characteristics.

The concerto is imbued with a symphonic concept throughout, an approach whose resemblance to Brahms's can hardly be lost on those familiar with both composers' works. The prominent solo role, aggressive and fluid from the start, succeeds in integrating itself quite satisfactorily with the larger orchestral entity.

Personnel change from private to public premieres

Wihan played the concerto at a private performance in Luzany, a village northeast of Prague, in August 1895; the other members of Wihan's string quartet were present. The first public performance was scheduled for England in spring 1896. Because of the Bohemian Quartet's engagements, Wihan was unavailable. The English cellist Leo Stern was selected for the honor. He had visited Prague in 1895; Dvořák may have invited him to introduce the new concerto, or Stern may have been chosen by the London Philharmonic Society. Stern played the premiere at London's Queen's Hall on 19 March 1896; the composer conducted.

SIDEBAR: IN THE COMPOSER'S WORDS

While putting the finishing touches on his new concerto late in 1895, Dvořák was on edge because of disagreements with his intended soloist. Hanuš Wihan (1855-1920) had played in several important German orchestras, including as a soloist with the Munich Court Orchestra. He became friendly with Liszt, and was later a member of the Bohemian String Quartet. He

developed had a big ego and was determined to add his bravura input to the new concerto with two flashy cadenzas.

Equally determined to prevent Wihan from making changes in the first edition, Dvořák wrote to his publisher Fritz Simrock on 3 October:

Dear Mr. Simrock:

The copyist is not finished yet, but next week everything will be ready. I have had some differences of opinion with friend Wihan on account of a number of places. I do not like some of the passages -- and I must insist on my work being printed as I have written it. The passages in question can be printed in two versions, an *easier* and *more difficult* version. I shall only give you the work if you promise not to allow *anybody* to make changes -- Friend Wihan not excepted -- without my *knowledge and consent* -- and also not the cadenza that Wihan has added to the last movement. There is no Cadenza in the last movement either in the score or in the piano arrangement. I told Wihan straight away when he showed it me that it was impossible to stick such a bit on. The finale closes gradually *diminuendo* -- like a sigh -- with reminiscences of the first and second movements -- the solo dies down to *pianissimo* (-- then swells again --) and the last bars are taken up by the orchestra and the whole concludes in stormy mood. -- That was my idea and I cannot depart from it. If then you agree to these conditions, including the printing of the titles also in Czech, I am willing to give you the Concerto and the Te Deum [Op.103] together for 6000M (six thousand marks).

With kind regards,
Ant. Dvořák

–From O. Šourek, *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences* (Prague, 1954), trans. R.L. Samsour

The letter is revealing on several levels. Simrock drove a tough bargain when he first began to publish Dvořák's music in 1877, and the relationship between composer and publisher was often strained. By the mid-1890s, however, the Czech composer wielded considerable influence. His music sold well and was thus a profitable cash cow for Simrock. Dvořák could name his price with assurance, and issue instructions knowing that they would be followed.

His insistence on the Czech titles is another manifestation of pride in national heritage.

(Early on, Simrock printed all titles in German and listed the composer's first name as Anton. (Similarly, Dvořák also refused to allow himself to be bullied by a soloist more interested in showing off than maintaining musical integrity. Most interesting is the composer's detailed description of his musical intent in the finale, which outlines its links to the Viennese symphonic tradition.

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SIDEBAR: CHALLENGES OF THE CELLO CONCERTO

The violoncello is not a natural soloist. A descendant of the Renaissance and Baroque *viola da gamba*, it was deployed as a continuo instrument for much of the 18th century. As the *rococo* style evolved into what we call the high classic era, cello was an essential part of orchestral texture, reinforcing the bass, but it rarely took a solo role. In chamber music, for example the popular piano trio ensemble, the cello part mostly duplicated the pianist's left hand. Even in the string quartet, ostensibly a conversation among equals, cello rarely took the spotlight.

Still, the cello occasionally emerged from the sidelines. Twenty-seven solo concerti for cello by Vivaldi have survived – but there are 37 Vivaldi bassoon concerti, which places even that statistic in perspective. Bach's six unaccompanied cello Suites, BWV 1007-1012, are landmarks in the literature and essential repertoire to all who play the instrument.

Notably 18th-century composers writing for cello were Luigi Boccherini, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, and Carl Stamitz. Haydn wrote two cello concerti that remain in the repertoire, probably for Joseph Weigl or Anton Kraft, cellists in the Esterháza court orchestra – that remain in the repertoire. Cello sonatas were peculiarly rare in the 18th century. Not until Beethoven's two sonatas for cello and piano, Op.5 (1796) did the instrument acquire some hefty pieces to place it on equal footing with the keyboard. A couple of generations later, Brahms followed with two magnificent sonatas for the instrument, but most 19th-century cello music consists of études and salon pieces.

As a solo instrument with orchestra, cello experienced a near drought in the 19th century. Yes, a few important exceptions have achieved their niche: Schumann's late Cello Concerto (1850), a flawed but worthy work; Tchaikovsky's flashy *Rococo* Variations (1876); and French concerti by Camille Saint-Saëns (1872) and Edouard Lalo (1877). Compared to the bountiful harvest reaped by pianists and violinists, this is not a large quantity of great literature – part of the reason that the Dvořák Concerto is so precious to cellists. Why did it take so long?

The answer lies in part in the very character of the cello, which lacks the violin's ability to cut through the sound of full orchestra. Before Dvořák, composers were reluctant to write for cello and orchestra for fear that it would not be heard. Baroque and early Classical concerti pitted the soloist against a much smaller ensemble. Part of the Dvořák concerto's magic is that it is possible to hear the soloist – and with drama and power. The symphonic dimensions of the work are admirable, with rich, ingenious, and varied orchestration.

Dvořák was an inspiration to the century that followed. Thanks to the excellent role

model provided by this work and to the advocacy of such 20th-century virtuosi as Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann, and Mstislav Rostropovich, cellists have a much richer solo literature. Magnificent concerti and sonatas by Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Britten anchor the 20th-century literature. In recent decades, players have commissioned concerti from a wide range of composers, who continue to explore the sonic and expressive capabilities of the instrument.

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Three Dances from the Ballet *Estancia*, Op. 8a

Alberto Ginastera

Born 11 April, 1916 in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Died 25 June, 1983 in Geneva, Switzerland

Approximate duration 11 minutes

Composed 1941

First performance 12 May 1943 in Buenos Aires. Ferruccio Calusio led the Teatro Colón Orchestra.

Instrumentation: woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion, piano, and strings.

More than two decades into the twenty-first century, Alberto Ginastera's reputation continues to grow. Unquestionably the greatest exponent of Argentinian music in the last century, Ginastera attracts an increasingly broad and more receptive audience, drawn by sheer melodic beauty and intense rhythmic drive in his music. His was a constantly evolving style.

Some of his proponents allege that his real achievement as a composer was the mature operas of the 1960s and 1970s: *Don Rodrigo* (1964), *Bomarzo* (1967), and *Beatriz Cenci* (1971). But fans of Ginastera's compelling instrumental music are quick to defend his splendid solo concertos -- for harp (1956-65), piano (No. 1, 1961 and No. 2, 1971), strings (1965), violin (1963), and cello (1968), as well as the powerful and evocative *Pampeanas* series, inspired by the expansive South American prairie.

Ginastera composed *Estancia*, his second ballet score, for Lincoln Kirstein and the American Ballet Caravan. Kirstein and choreographer George Balanchine had planned a program of three Latin American ballets for their 1941-1942 season, during which they were touring South America. Unfortunately the project did not immediately come to fruition, because the ballet troupe disbanded in 1942. Ginastera had to wait eleven years to see his ballet staged at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, with choreography by Michel Borovski.

Understandably, when he learned that the commissioned performances would not take place, he sought to salvage the music he had written. To that end, Ginastera extracted an orchestral suite from the full score. The Suite was premièred in Buenos Aires in May 1943, and has become one of Ginastera's best known works. *Estancia*, which is the Argentinian term for "ranch," is inspired by scenes of rural Argentinian life. Ginastera's ballet scenario concerns an urban youth who loses his heart to a tomboy ranch girl; initially she dismisses him as a sissy from the city. The subtitles of the movements we hear -- three of the original one-act ballet's five scenes -- are self-explanatory: "The Land Workers," "Wheat Dance," and "Final Dance - [*Malambo*]" (A *Malambo* is a dance tournament between two *gauchos* [ranch cowboys].) This

one is a thriller, building at a fierce pace to a splendid, flashy close.