



GERSHWIN'S CUBAN OVERTURE and DVOŘÁK'S "NEW WORLD"*

Friday and Saturday, February 8-9, 2019 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, February 10, 2019 at 2 p.m.

MICHAEL STERN, *conductor*

GERSHWIN

Cuban Overture, "Rumba"

HANSON

Symphony No. 2, op. 30, "Romantic"

I. Adagio— Allegro moderato

II. Andante con tenerezza

III. Allegro con brio

INTERMISSION

DVOŘÁK

Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, op. 95, [old No. 5],
"From the New World"

I. Adagio — Allegro molto

II. Largo

III. Molto vivace

IV. Allegro con fuoco

**Please note, this program has changed.*

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Gershwin's two-week trip to Havana, "where no sleep was had," inspired his *Cuban Overture*. The vibrant work prominently features Cuban percussion instruments Gershwin discovered during his visit.

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

Cuban Overture, "Rumba" (1932) 11 minutes

Piccolo, 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, bongos, claves, cymbals, glockenspiel, gourd, maracas, snare drum, wood block, xylophone and strings.

In February 1932, George Gershwin and some of his friends vacationed in Havana; they spent "two hysterical weeks in Cuba, where no sleep was had." Gershwin was fascinated by the popular music he heard in Havana and in particular its use of exotic percussion instruments. Gershwin took several of these instruments, including claves, gourd, maracas and bongos, back to New York, and incorporated them into an orchestral work he originally entitled *Rumba*. In a note included in the original score, Gershwin directed those instruments be placed in front of the conductor's stand. On August 16, 1932, *Rumba* premiered at New York's outdoor Lewisohn Stadium as part of an all-Gershwin concert. Albert Coates conducted the New York Philharmonic. More than 15,000 people attended the concert, and as the composer recalled, "just about 5,000 were at the closed gates trying to fight their way in." For Gershwin, "it was the most exciting night I ever had."

Gershwin later renamed *Rumba* as the *Cuban Overture*. The piece is notable for the vibrancy and melodic genius that are

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

GERSHWIN *Cuban Overture*

Boston Pops / Arthur Fiedler, conductor

Label: RCA Victor Living Stereo Catalog # 61393

hallmarks of Gershwin's finest works. The overture is in A-B-A form. The two rollicking A sections frame a lyrical central episode featuring a beguiling clarinet solo. A varied reprise of the opening A section leads to the *Cuban Overture's* rousing conclusion.



American composer Howard Hanson wrote his “Romantic” Symphony for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, as part of its 50th anniversary celebrations. Hanson sought “to create a work young in spirit, Romantic in temperament, and simple and direct in expression.”

HOWARD HANSON (1896-1981)

Symphony No. 2, op. 30, “Romantic” (1930) 28 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbals, harp and strings.

In 1924, American composer Howard Hanson, then 28 years old, began his 40-year tenure as director of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Under his loving and energetic guidance, the Eastman School became one of the country's most prestigious conservatories. Hanson also was an accomplished conductor, and built the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra into a top-rank ensemble. Several of Hanson's recordings with the orchestra are still available.

In addition to his demanding academic duties, Hanson maintained

a highly active and successful career as a composer. Serge Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony commissioned and premiered Hanson's “Romantic” Symphony for the 1930 celebration of the orchestra's 50th anniversary.

The symphony is notable for its melodic inspiration and rich orchestral canvas. Hanson observed:

...as the subtitle implies, it represents for me a definite



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and acknowledged embracing of the Romantic phase. I recognize, of course, that Romanticism is, at the present time, the poor stepchild, without the social standing of her elder sister, Neoclassicism. Nevertheless, I embrace her all the more fervently, believing as I do, that Romanticism will find in this country rich soil for a new, young and vigorous growth. My aim, in this symphony, has been to create a work young in spirit, Romantic in temperament, and simple and direct in expression.

Some viewed Hanson's overtly Romantic approach to composition as out-of-date — an anachronism. But his work has maintained an important place in the concert hall, an affirmation of its creator's faith in Romanticism as an enduring form of musical expression.

Hanson's own program notes for the 1930 world premiere of the three-movement symphony describe the work opening with "an atmospheric introduction in the woodwinds." The ensuing quick-tempo portion of the opening movement, in sonata form, features the introduction, development and recapitulation of the principal themes. Music from this first movement returns throughout the remainder of the "Romantic" Symphony. The lyrical slow-tempo second movement "begins with its principal theme announced by the woodwinds with a sustained string accompaniment." The horn solo from the first movement's introduction "develops into the subordinate theme." The Andante concludes with a reprise of its principal theme. The closing portion of the vigorous finale includes reprises of music from the opening movement, capped by "a final fanfare and the end of the symphony."

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

HANSON Symphony No. 2, "Romantic"

Eastman Rochester Orchestra / Howard Hanson, conductor

Label: Mercury Living Presence Catalog # 4756867



In his Ninth Symphony, Dvořák celebrated both Native American and African-American folk music, which he viewed as central to American artistic expression.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, op. 95
("From the New World") (1893)

40 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets,
2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani,
cymbals, triangle and strings.

From the fall of 1892 through the summer of 1895, Czech composer Antonín Dvořák served as Director of the National Conservatory of Music of America, located in New York City. Dvořák came to New York at the invitation of Jeannette Meyer Thurber, who founded the Conservatory with the hope it would foster the development of important American concert music.

When Dvořák arrived in America, he began to study the musical heritage of the "New World." Dvořák concluded that America's great folk tradition was based in the music of African-Americans (it should be noted that in May 1893 the National Conservatory opened its doors to African-American students). Dvořák also acknowledged the importance of Native American folk music.

On May 24, 1893, Dvořák completed his Symphony in E Minor, which he had begun the previous December, and gave it its famous nickname, "From the New World." The work received its premiere at New York's Carnegie Hall on December 16, 1893, with Anton Seidl conducting the New York Philharmonic.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

DVOŘÁK Symphony No. 9, "From the New World"

Czech Philharmonic / Karel Ančerl, conductor

Label: Supraphon Catalog # 4016

The “New World” Symphony is in four movements. The first opens with a pensive slow-tempo introduction, leading to the principal Allegro molto. Dvořák presents several themes, including one (introduced by the flute) that bears a kinship to “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” a spiritual especially favored by the Czech composer. The second movement features one of Dvořák’s most-adored melodies. Played by the English horn, Dvořák’s pupil, William Arms Fisher, later adapted this melody for the song “Goin’ Home.” According to Dvořák, “a scene at the feast in [Longfellow’s] ‘Hiawatha’ where the Indians dance” inspired the third movement. The dramatic finale is notable for the return of themes from the prior three movements.

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