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From Bohemia to the New World: Dvořák's Ninth Symphony and the Quest for an American Musical Identity

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I. Introduction

On the evening of December 16, 1893 at New York City's Carnegie Hall, Anton Seidl gave the downbeat for the premiere of Dvořák's Ninth Symphony, *From the New World*. As Dvořák himself watched from the audience**,** the New York Philharmonic took those in attendance for a journey across various styles of music found in this masterpiece: hurried and lethargic, vigorous and hesitant, fierce and gentle. As the final grand progression of chords reverberated across the concert hall, the audience erupted in thunderous applause. Immediately, the symphony was described as a "vigorous and beautiful work,"[1] and it would come to mark the pinnacle of Dvořák's music in this new country. His work created a distinction between traditional European music and an emerging American music identity. The symphony revealed the potential and set the foundation for a distinctly American style of music.

Mere days after its first premiere, *From the New World* headlined countless newspapers and articles, and Dvořák received national appraisal. The *New York Times* lauded the symphony for demonstrating "artistic purpose of the finest kind."[2] A complex masterpiece with innovative rhythms and harmonic progressions lasting nearly an hour, Dvořák's ninth symphony served its unique purpose: to introduce American classical music to a new era of cultural innovation and establish a national music identity. By fusing together several diverse landscapes of his newly adopted American life and Bohemian roots into one grand symphony, Dvořák celebrated his interactions with the various musical genres of the nation. He had sought to forge a musical voice that was separate from European influences by drawing together a rich tapestry of African-American spirituals, Native-American tunes, and Bohemian musical styles. The fulfillment of this vision, beginning with *From the New World*, offered his audiences a symphonic microcosm of the diversity of American culture and paved the way for the eventual innovation of jazz music.

II. Dvořák and the National Conservatory

Understanding the background of Dvořák's rise to prominence in America begins by looking at his association with the National Conservatory of Music. This institution was first established in 1885 by philanthropist Jeannette Thurber who desired to provide America with a new school of music. Her vision was to emulate the great schools of music in Europe, specifically the Paris Conservatory.[3] She also yearned to create an American identity within this institution, just as schools in Europe had established a distinct European identity. She supported this ambition with the following words:

"America has, so far, done nothing in a National way either to promote the musical education of its people or to develop any musical genius they possess, and that in this, she stands alone among the civilized nations of the world."[4]

Thurber's statement revealed a significant motivation behind Dvořák's eventual distinct 'American' compositional style. The emphasis upon singling out America among other "civilized nations of the world" conveyed that Thurber and Dvořák had a specific and explicit vision to birth and nurture the true "musical genius" that America possessed.

As a result, Thurber invested tons of time and money into this project, hoping to free western music from possessive European parents. The school was heavily advertised across the country, not just to New York alone.[5]

The Conservatory made headlines in many smaller cities outside of the larger metropolitan areas.[6] Faculty and student enrollments in the school grew steadily, and within a few years, the conservatory became a "vital force in [America's] musical development."[7] Eventually supported by the U.S. Congress, the tuition-free American school was especially inclusive, recruiting all kinds of talent from different ethnic and financial backgrounds. It was the first music school, for instance, to include African-Americans and women.

Prior to Dvořák's arrival in America in 1892, however, the National Conservatory of Music struggled financially. Because it was a non-profit and tuition-free institution, the school had to endure an overwhelming financial burden.[8] Despite such setbacks, repeated efforts to gain leverage from the U.S. government resulted in Congress passing a bill to charter the National Conservatory. This bill read:

"Said corporation is hereby empowered to found, establish, and maintain a national conservatory of music within the District of Columbia for the education of citizens of the United States and such other persons as the trustees may deem proper in all the branches of music. The said corporation shall have the power to grant and confer diplomas and degree of doctor of music or other honorary degrees."[9]

Through this establishment, the school paved the way for a variety of new musical careers because it placed a stronger emphasis on musical education. The school's fame grew exponentially, and the public began sending financial donations to support Thurber's initiative.

Because of this renewed financial stability, Thurber needed a reputable director, a leader who would guide this new institution. She offered a contract to many internationally renowned composers, including Antonín Dvořák in 1891. At first, because the job entailed fostering American music virtually from scratch, Dvořák met Thurber's offer with hesitancy. Dvořák also had very minimal desire to travel to America in the first place because he understood the potential familial complications that may occur by leaving his family back in Europe.[10] However, Thurber desperately "wanted a big name" and was "prepared to pay for it."[11] She offered a contract more than twenty times his salary in Europe and bombarded countless letters and telegrams to the composer. After frequent negotiations, Dvořák accepted the contract, knowing that he would at least have the necessary financial support. When reflecting on this moment, Thurber describes it as her most treasured accomplishment:

"In looking back over my thirty-five years of activity as President of the National Conservatory of Music of America there is nothing I am so proud of as having been able to bring Dr. Dvorak to America…"[12]

In late 1892 when Dvořák first arrived in his "New World," he expressed a sense of urgency and responsibility. Commenting on this duty, Dvořák emphasized, "[t]he Americans are expecting great things of me."[13] During his time in America, he felt that he owed the country something special: "to show them the path to the promised land and the kingdom of a new, independent art; in short, to create a national music."[14] Dvořák's emphasis upon the promised land and a new kingdom seized on the ideal that America was laying the foundation for a new world order. He recognized that this new power would yearn to produce the highest forms of art to join the admired reputations of other countries around the world.

Dvořák was inspired to make a change: the complete transformation of the American musical scene. Because he was a renowned leader back in his home country of the Czech Republic, America exercised this expectation of change. He was initially "awed by the responsibility"[15] amidst his arrival at the immense, busy and innovative nation, which only further outlined the job he was to complete:

"When I see how much is done in every other field by public spirited men in America - how schools, universities, libraries, museums, hospitals, and parks spring up out of the ground and are maintained by generous gifts - I can only marvel that so little has been done for music."[16]

A crucial part of Dvořák's responsibilities was to elevate the musical arts to the status of other elements of high culture in America. As the director of the new school, his responsibilities also included mentoring the students who attended. He would later gain inspiration from the experiences of his African American students, realizing that American music was defined by these young, fresh minds. These interactions would forever reshape how he perceived this new identity he aimed to establish.

Jeannette Thurber supported Dvořák in every step of his time in America. Going far beyond financial support, she organized concerts for Dvořák's music, including the premiere of his ninth symphony and other works. Her restless efforts of fostering public awareness and encouraging citizens to attend musical events placed a spotlight on Dvořák's compositions. Perhaps the most crucial assistance Thurber provided was encouraging Dvořák to embrace artistic freedom, allowing him to seek and discover a unique American sound without interference. In this way, Thurber and Dvorak's interactions at the conservatory laid the foundation for the eventual realization of their shared dream for American art: the integration of multiple musical heritages into one

authentic American musical voice. Built on elevated levels of personal and professional trust, Dvořák's relationship with Thurber was thus integral to the composer's success in America.

III. Formation of the New World Symphony

After Dvořák had spent some time in the nation, he formulated his prophecy for American music. This audacious statement would forever guide all of his work in America and empower the musical creativity for a particular group of people: Black Americans.[17]

"I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies… In the negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music. They are pathetic, tender, passionate, melancholy, solemn, religious, bold, merry, gay or what you will. It is music that suits itself to any mood or any purpose. There is nothing in the whole range of composition that cannot be supplied with themes from this source."[18]

These universal tunes, he concluded, "must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition in the United States."[19] However, these bold assertions were initially met with hesitancy from the American people. They were disinclined to have such a school be built from "unpretentious foundations"[20] because Black Americans were not yet regarded equal to whites in the country. Nevertheless, Dvořák and his successors would later fulfill this prophecy through their numerous compositions, many of which would bear the influence of black musical heritage. These themes of incorporating unique American tunes into his music would become most famous and apparent in Dvořák's *From The New World*.

Dvořák first began this composition in late 1892 when he felt especially homesick during his residency at the National Conservatory. At the time, Thurber encouraged Dvořák to create a masterpiece that could encapsulate all of his wistful emotions.[21] She encouraged him to document everything that he experienced in America through a symphony that embodied "all his experiences and feelings," a suggestion which he quickly followed.[22] Through his numerous sources of inspiration, whether it be through listening to spirituals sung by his own students or admiring the lush richness of the American landscape, this symphony would quickly emerge as the culmination of Dvořák's American legacy.

African American Inspiration

One of the most significant factors behind Dvořák's success was the increasing abundance of African-Americans at his conservatory. Thurber provided countless scholarships to these students with the hope of diversifying American music and giving it a unique identity that distinguished it from Europe. One of these students was Harry Burleigh. Burleigh was Dvořák's assistant at the conservatory, and Dvořák saw in him a reflection of himself as the same student and aspiring artist.[23] The two figures worked together harmoniously, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship: Dvořák provided leverage for Burleigh's career, and Burleigh provided inspiration for Dvořák's music.[24]

Growing up, Burleigh had constantly listened to and learned several of the old plantation songs from his blind grandfather, who had been a slave. He commented that he "remembered his Mother's singing after chores and how he and his [step] father and grandfather all harmonized while helping her."[25] These songs, as Burleigh described them, were "spontaneous outbursts of intense religious fervor… [t]hey were never 'composed,' but spring into life."[26] They were essential in bringing to the enslaved community hope that their future would be bright and prosperous. In these songs, the "cadences of sorrow invariably turn to joy, and the message is ever manifest that eventually deliverance from all that thunders and oppresses the soul will come, and man– every man– will be free."[27] These same songs, now called spirituals, that Burleigh's family sang to him, Burleigh sang to Dvořák. Burleigh said that while Dvořák was in the process of composing his work, "he used to get tired during the day and I, [Burleigh], would sing to him after supper."[28] The most famous of the spirituals, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," moved Dvořák deeply, and as a result, he would incorporate the passionate style in the main theme of his second movement, which would later be named "Goin' Home." "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" frequently references the personal experiences of the slaves that are "permeated with the themes which concerned him most– life, death, freedom, hope."[29] These songs, passionate and emotional, were a form of expression for the slaves' "worldview," evoking senses of "consolation" and "loneliness."[30] As described by Burleigh himself, "Dvořák saturated himself with the spirit of these old tunes and then invented his own themes,"[31] delicately interwoven throughout the movements.

Native American Inspiration

Native American melodies formed another integral source of inspiration for Dvořák's ninth symphony. Dvořák had a deep affection for Native American music and aimed to incorporate these melodies into his work. He was first exposed to these tunes when he and Thurber watched the Buffalo Bill's Indians dance for potential ballet composition endeavors.[32] These shows, filled with native dancing and music, frequently involved various

"episodes from the savage historic intertribal warfare."[33] Despite Dvořák's operatic project ultimately proving fruitless, the experience gave him a preliminary idea of avenues towards incorporating such style.

The most famous connection between Dvořák's music and Native American culture is found in the way that the symphony's second movement *Largo* draws upon Longfellow's poem "The Song of Hiawatha." One of the most notable written works in the 19th century, the poem featured stories and adventures of Native American characters.[34] Decades before arriving in America, Dvořák already "had the idea of someday utilizing that poem,"[35] being "immensely captivated" by it and showing great "interest and fervor."[36] Parallels between Dvořák's music and the poem can be identified through their similar "evocation of romanticized nostalgia for a primitive, pastoral, yet human existence."[37] Additionally, the style of the symphony's second movement suggest that the melodies seem to "symbolize a kind of timeless tableau: something that happened long ago and far away."[38] These emotions Dvořák yearned to express were far behind him, and he wished to evoke warm feelings of nostalgia through his passionate music. The "pastoral language" in his music "implied consonance and a sense of landscape,"[39] a notion which Dvořák would come to further embrace when he visited Iowa. While these sentiments would initiate unseen controversy in the future, Dvořák was firm in asserting his belief that the "future of music is in the hands of the red man."[40]

Summers in Iowa

Closely related to his nostalgic inspiration were his summer trips to Iowa, where there was a high concentration of fellow Bohemians. Living away from his home country made Dvořák's life difficult. Thurber described her perspective of Dvořák's strong emotions as the following:

"On the whole, Dvorak seemed to be happy in his new surroundings, although he suffered much from homesickness… Anton Seidl was probably right in declaring that the intense pathos of the [Largo]... was inspired by nostalgia — by longing for home… He used to be particularly homesick on steamer days when he read the shipping news in the New York Herald. Thoughts of home often moved him to tears."[41]

In Spillville, Iowa, Dvořák found peace in Iowa's rolling hills. For Dvořák, the landscapes of Spillville became an "American Bohemia."[42] He found inspiration from nature: "[t]he sound of birds, streams, and brooks" would shape not only his *From the New World*, but also many other major works that he created in America.[43] Specifically, in the summer of 1893 while sitting "along the banks of the Turkey river listening to the birds," Dvořák composed his String Quartet No. 12 in F, subtitled the "American Quartet," and his String Quintet No. 3 in E-Flat. These pieces, which maintain prominence in our modern era, were considered music of the utmost "highest form."[44] The two works, along with *From the New World*, reflect "the happy, restful moments and the magic of the beautiful countryside that the composer would walk every day… shortly after sunrise."[45]

Beyond the serenity that he found in Iowa's countryside, this landscape also provided him with other opportunities to encounter Native American culture. Everyday, Dvořák and his family came into contact with the Indians, and these Native Americans performed cultural singing and dancing several times.[46] During these ceremonies, many different members performed, suggesting the presence of various representatives of numerous tribes.[47]

The experiences that Dvorak had in Iowa shaped his music to reflect the varied contours of the American landscape and the cultural diversity that he often found in a singular setting. The fact that he encountered these two independent heritages in Iowa would mirror the many cultures unified in this one symphony. By firmly establishing the connection between landscape and music, Dvořák's music brought together these diverse sources of inspiration and created a distinctive American style.

Musical Innovations and the Path to the Premiere

Within his unification of American culture, Dvořák employed several unique musical elements. For example, his symphony came to include an abundance of the pentatonic scale, which was a significant departure from the traditions of classical music.[48] This five-note harmonic progression removed the fourth and seventh notes of ordinary diatonic major sequences that were most common in European music.[49] First emerging from African American and Native American music, this unique scale is the most melodious and soothing. Many, in fact, directly attribute Dvořák's usage of this scale to such tunes.[50] Additionally, Dvořák composed more melodies and complex harmonic progressions in minor keys that specifically lacked leading tones.[51] These musical innovations gave the symphony "some kind of musical otherness, of voices and 'spirits'" that moved beyond the conventions of 19th century European symphonies.[52]

Despite this pronounced complexity, Dvořák finished this four movement long masterpiece in merely half a year. The public had long awaited the premiere of this symphony, largely due to Dvořák's own intriguing public statements about the use of African American and Native American tunes "as the foundation for an American national school of music."[53] In the afternoon of December 15, 1893, the New York Philharmonic held a public full rehearsal of the symphony.[54] Although it was a brisk winter day with pouring rain, even after all the seats were filled, a queue formed outside Carnegie Hall just to get a mere glimpse into what was to come.[55]

With countless New York presses having written numerous articles about the work in anticipation, the symphony was now ready to make its debut on the world stage. The work was done, and Dvořák could only hope the public would receive it well. The world held its breath with brimming hopes, and with the weight of the immense expectations of the American people, the sun receded one final time.

IV. A New World Unveiled: Dvořák's Historic Carnegie Hall Premiere

As the seats of Carnegie Hall began to fill on the winter evening, the New York Philharmonic took the stage in front of the vast and packed concert hall. Dvořák's New World Symphony would be preceded by two equally renowned works: Mendelssohn's "Overture, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'" and Brahms' "Concerto for Violin, in D, Op. 77." The premiere of *From the New World* would be the finale of the concert. Dvořák himself entered the vast concert hall, taking his seat in the second tier of Box #10, which gave him an overseeing perspective on the performance.[56]

Descriptions and positive reactions of the premiere were immediately publicized in *The New York Times* the very next day. The newspaper described the work as opening "with a slow, solemn, mysterious introduction," which symbolically represents the "strangeness and vastness of the New World."[57] The *Times* also characterized the symphony's melody as following a faster pentatonic pattern. In the second movement, the audience embarked on a journey of nostalgia through a "marvelously pathetic melody uttered by the plaintive voice of the English horn," an iconic tune that would come to be known as "Goin' Home."[58] This second movement, the *New York Herald* commented, contrasts with its successor in the third movement: a faster, more lively *scherzo* dance filled with staccato and inspired by Indian dances.[59] The fourth and final movement, *allegro con fuoco*, forms the culmination of the symphony, with all the previous themes reappearing in unique and innovative ways.[60] The primary brass melody is triumphant and "magnificent in its breadth and vigor."[61] The symphony concludes in a transition from a minor key to a contrasting chord progression described as "a blaze of major-key glory,": a thoughtful conclusion to *From the New World* given the conductor's own triumph in his New World.[62]

The accolades that the symphony received included praise from the composer's own son, Otakar. Sitting in the audience with his father, Otakar recalled that the concert was a "success so immerse that it was beyond ordinary imagining."[63] Additionally, despite the standard convention of a piece of classical music to be played through entirely uninterrupted, the audience insisted on waiting until Dvořák himself walked on stage and accepted standing ovations after the completion of the second movement.[64] This unprecedented event only further displayed the magnificence of the work. After the performance, the audience erupted into applause for such a lengthy amount of time that Dvořák felt the need to show his gratitude "like a king."[65] Otakar explained that his father stepped up to the podium and must have bowed together with his conductor, Anton Seidl, twenty times in order to get the audience to stop applauding, as if his father was being presented in a royal role before the people.[66] That night was especially memorable and filled with euphoria for all those involved.

V. Initial Resonance and Response

While the audience that witnessed the premiere of Dvořák's ninth symphony may have erupted with positive acclaim, the immediate aftermath of the performance was met with waves of critics and skeptics. In some ways, the most striking effect of the premiere of *From the New World* came from the previously unparalleled level of American musical criticism, which was both positive and negative.[67]

The most famous critic and journalist of Dvořák's ninth symphony was Henry Krehbiel, who was considered the respected "dean" of New York's numerous music critics at the time.[68] He was a close friend of Dvořák and assisted the composer in the creation of the symphony, attending rehearsals and offering musical advice. Krehbiel's numerous passages of tens of thousands of words regarding the symphony made frequent appearances in the city's most famous newspapers during the months following the premiere. In Krehbiel's eyes, the symphony was "beautiful… worthy of all its predecessors from the pen of Dr. Dvorak… worthy of the American people."[69] He asserted that Dvořák's music was uniquely American, living up to its widespread expectations of fostering the future of the nation's music.

Whereas Krehbiel predominantly supported Dvořák's musical choices, others were more critical in their reactions. Some authors claimed that Dvořák was misrepresenting 'American' music. Boston critic Philip Hale notoriously dismissed the work's "American quality."[70] He claimed that by implementing songs of the American negro, the composer had intentionally "neglected the more respectable aspects of American society."[71] Naturally, such blatant racist claims were harshly reprimanded by Krehbiel, who quickly responded in the *New York Tribune*:[72]

"If the melodies which he has composed… into a symphony contain elements which belong also to the music of other peoples, so does the American people contain elements of the races to which those elements are congenial. Let them be Scotch, let them be Irish, let them be German, let them be African, or Indian, in them there is that which makes appeal to the whole people, and therefore, like the people, they are American."[73]

In opposition to Hale, Krehbiel firmly upheld his belief of Dvořák's ingenuity by drawing parallels between Dvořák's sources of inspiration and the diverse American population. He specified that given the vast cultural diversity of America, Dvořák's work was "a product of [the] American environment; that it is native is proved by the fact that it is congenial to American taste, that it touches the American heart."[74]

Similar to Hale, Boston critic and composer George Chadwick condemned Dvořák's prophecy and intention to popularize Negro melodies prior to the symphony's premiere. Chadwick dismissingly said he would be "sorry to see Negro melodies become the basis of an American school of musical composition."[75] This perspective essentially belittled the value of Dvořák's prophecy of the importance of African-American music. Chadwick went even further, taking an opportunity granted by the National Conservatory to participate in a musical competition against Dvořák, one from which a "true American composer would emerge."[76] Judges would vote for the composer with music of the highest standard, and Chadwick finished his newest symphony just for the occasion.[77] Nevertheless, his efforts ended futile.[78] When Dvořák won, it was Chadwick who received immense mockery. Writers of the Boston Herald lamented Chadwick, criticizing the quality his work and his baseless arrogance: "If the masterpieces in this form of composition by Mozart, Beethoven… and Dvořák are symphonies, then this work of Mr. Chadwick's must be placed in some other class of composition,"[79] a level inferior compared to Dvořák. Although certain figures made arguments against Dvořák's mission and prophecy, these claims were opposed and refuted by the American public, only making Dvořák's influence even more monumental after the initial excitement around *From the New World* died down.

VI. Lasting Legacy: The Search of An American Musical Identity

Following the turn of the 20th century, America was beginning to rise on the international stage in many different fields, from the military, to the economy, to science and technology. In the realm of music, however, America had not yet established an artistic culture that was worth sharing with the world.[80] In the words of renowned American composer and critic Aaron Copland, American composers needed to find music that "speak[s] of universal things in a vernacular of American speech rhythms… music on a level that [leaves] popular music far behind."[81] Copland's words gave voice to the hope that Dvořák's symphony might be viewed as a blueprint of sorts for how American music could create this vernacular and an identity that would be shared with the world.[82] Such a pursuit would end fruitfully beyond the composer's lifetime in two main spheres of influence. He would exert an enormous impact on the subsequent generation of composers, pioneers who will fulfill the model Dvořák left. Beyond this inspiration for the future, his compositions would also lead to the birth and early development of jazz.[83]

Dvořák's Progeny

Understanding the influence that Dvořák would have upon jazz begins by looking at the musical progeny that he produced and influenced. Although inexplicably lacking significant modern prevalence, the pupils with whom Dvorak worked during his time at the National Conservatory would prove to exert an enormous impact on the future of American music.[84] By implementing the blueprint that Dvořák had left behind, Dvořák's students fulfilled their mentor's prophecy of incorporating music of the American negro.

In addition to his assistance and contributions to Dvořák's music, Harry Burleigh transformed his vocalized spirituals to formalized concert songs.[85] For example, in 1916, Burleigh composed an arrangement of the famous spiritual "Deep River," which demonstrated his understanding of varying nuances in the importance of blend between soloists and accompanists.[86] Moreover, he made his version unique by adjusting the range of the melodies to the comfort of the singers. He put the majority of the music in the midrange, while only using the "extremes of register for musical and textual emphasis."[87] He also eliminated unnecessary repetition, while intentionally keeping some with a "structural goal."[88] His version of "Deep River" is only one of many compositions he crafted that maintains his status as a pioneer of African American music and part of "the mainstream of American musical scholarship."[89] Needless to say, the numerous techniques he employed, including innovative chromaticism and harmonic language, formed the driving factor behind why Burleigh's spirituals continue to be in "consistent demand,"[90] beyond the beginning of the twentieth century.

William Arms Fisher was another pupil of Dvořák that would make a monumental impact on the popularization of African American music. When he moved to New York City in 1890, Fisher became the instructor in harmony at the National Conservatory of Music, studying under Dvořák. He is most famous for his transcription of Dvořák's *Largo* to the famous tune "Goin' Home."[91] His famous lyrics were inspired by his first-hand recognition of Dvořák's wish to evoke strong feelings of nostalgia and homesickness. Declaring that "the lyric opening theme of the Largo should spontaneously suggest the words "Goin' home, Goin' home" is natural enough,"[92] he described music as the following:

"From the rudest tom-tom to the greatest modern orchestra, from the wildest savage chant to the richest choral utterance man has as yet conceived, music has arisen from the hidden deeps in human nature to express with marvelous versatility every type and shade of man's emotional life."[93]

His universal perspective on the art led to his collaborations with other post-Dvořák composers, who also employed negro melodies. Among these works included the arrangement *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies* with Samuel Coleridge Taylor, another student of Dvořák.[94] Similar to Burleigh, Fisher was a crucial pioneer of employing and promoting African American melodies in music, inspiring artists of subsequent generations.

The Rise of Jazz

Fisher's description of music tied with expressing diverse emotions would perfectly foreshadow the gradual creation of what would become one of the most significant musical genres in American history. Rooted in negro themes, this form of music can be played in virtually any style and speed to convey many different moods and emotions. Dvořák envisioned his *From the New World* to inspire unique, innovative genres of Black classical music; never could he have imagined the fulfillment of his prophecy to be attributed to and culminated in the formation of jazz.[95]

In the earlier twentieth century, America was filled with countless different ethnic groups coming from such different backgrounds that there seemed to be no common way to unite the diverse population. As Leonard Bernstein described in his 1939 Harvard senior thesis, America possessed a population "more international than is commonly supposed," with various communities beyond American borders.[96] A truly 'American Music,' wrote diplomat Frederick Nast, "cannot be expected until the present discordant elements are merged into a homogeneous people."[97] The nation lacked a concrete identity, something that should be universal in all Americans. However, for Bernstein, jazz provided the "ultimate common denominator."[98] This new style was something that all Americans could relate to, no matter their heritage, thus unlocking the "essence of American music."[99]

Jazz, unique for its *rubato*-like rhythms and improvisation, represented the perfect style for post-Dvořák music in America.[100] Contrary to common belief, jazz was not completely a Negro product but rather a combination of many different influences. Similar to all genres of music, the rise of jazz was an "evolutionary process wherein growth and fusion [were] so gradual" that change seemed almost imperceptible.[101]

The rise of jazz can be attributed to the combination of two prior styles: the "blues" and "ragtime." The "blues," which originated in the late 19th century, drew upon French and Spanish influences of creole African American style.[102] This involved the bending of notes with wavering pitches, especially between the major and minor thirds.[103] This type of music stretched past simply reading fixed notes on the page. Additionally, "ragtime," which developed simultaneously as the "blues" and also fused African-American and European styles, was unique for its unprecedented syncopation: placing emphasis on off-beat notes.[104] From the combination of the "blues" and "ragtime" emerged jazz.[105]

The new music quickly made efforts to popularize around the United States, holding major prevalence in Black-oriented communities, most famously New Orleans. However, during the time period, jazz and affiliated African American music were only a marginalized aspect of American musical performance. Concurrent segregation practices only made such Black influence harder for the American public to accept, and Dvořák's prophecy seemed increasingly difficult to fulfill.[106] Performances in concert halls, stages, and theaters would always adhere to the taste of the public.[107] Unfortunately, these musical expressions of "black America" were mostly supported in more segregated institutions, such as night clubs in the major cities of New Orleans, New York, and Chicago.[108]

Nevertheless, musical tastes of the American public began to deviate in the 1930s as popular white band leaders began incorporating jazz to their own band music.[109] Through blending European tradition with new forms of jazz, the new genre began to take a more prominent role in the artistic world.

Jazz was a "new product of a new age," an art "uniquely American"– a form of music that would continue to grow in popularity throughout the twentieth century.[110] The music enabled musicians greater artistic and personal freedom of expression than traditional classical music, encouraging creative spontaneity defined merely by loose rhythmic structures and alternating soloists.[111] In this way, Dvořák's indirect influence upon jazz went beyond compositional style to include the composer's imagination and freedom to envision new styles. Jazz composers and musicians such as Ellington, Armstrong, and Gershwin further promoted the genre, alongside other notable Americans like Copland who hinted at jazz inspiration in his music. Bridging the gap between audience and performer, the free, interactive, and virtually structureless forms of jazz perfectly complemented the bustling nature of a growing and developing American society.

VII. Contemporary Criticism of Dvořák's Use of Native American Music

Despite receiving largely positive feedback during his lifetime, more recent critics have taken a more critical stance on the way that Dvořák portrayed certain styles of music in the New World Symphony. This is particularly the case with two aspects of the composer's use of Native American music: the ethical implications of using Indian music within American music and Dvořák's skewed presentation of the genre.[112]

Dvořák's portrayal of Native American music in his ninth symphony has left a more controversial legacy beginning already in his own lifetime.[113] At the time, following the turn of the twentieth century, Native American inspiration was becoming an integral part of American art, a new frontier in music of "rich, newly realized sound-world of raw power and unfiltered experience."[114] However, at the time, opponents of Dvořák's appropriation of Indian music refused to accept that it had any place in American "cultural heritage."[115] These critics believed that such music was not representative of American music as a whole, thus making its use and having a specifically *American* identity based around it a fresh source of controversy. For example, Gustav Mahler, one of the foremost composers of his time, declared that:

"American music based upon the crude themes of the red-skinned aborigines… is not… representative of the great American people of today…"[116]

This opinion of distancing the new American style from the "crude" indigenous styles of the Americas was held by many people. Mahler even included that these Indian melodies were "distorted copies of European folk-songs," and that the music was not only unrepresentative but also unoriginal.[117] As Mahler's critique revealed, despite the growing influence Indian music had on American art throughout the twentieth century, the ethical implications of using the music as a source of inspiration was not universally accepted.

During more recent decades, scholars have voiced that Dvořák's presentation of indigenous music was more of his own projection than a realistic or informed experience with them. His usage of Native American music, specifically in *From the New World*, was often regarded as fundamentally inaccurate because it reinforced the stereotype that such music was of the "noble savage."[118] His first impression in America during the spring of 1893 of the Buffalo Bills Indian Dance deeply skewed Dvořák's reception of Native American music as the performance displayed a "rather unrepresentative set of songs" that were "badly transcribed."[119] In the words of American historian Nathaniel Sikand-Youngs, this first impression would later create "racialized conceptions of indigenous people and culture"[120] in Dvořák's music. Critics of the later twentieth century also describe that Dvořák was unable "to see any accurate transcriptions of genuine Indian melodies."[121] Thus, his perception was ultimately based solely on what he knew at the time. In order to obtain any "true conception of the character of any branch of Indian song," he would have needed to truly understand, experience, and "hear the melodies sung by skilled Indian singers."[122] Despite having listened to music of many Native American tribes in Iowa, arguments have still been made that his work unfairly supported preconceived notions of music outside of Europe as "undeveloped, inferior"[123] and "primitive."[124]

VIII. Conclusion

Despite the continued critiques of the composer's appropriation of Native American music, few would disagree that Dvořák's compositions have exerted profound influence upon the American musical scene. In particular, *From the New World* symbolized a major shift in the nation's musical development. The symphony displayed the richness of Negro and Native American music and inspired new generations of composers, eventually encouraging the rise of jazz that fulfilled his long-lasting prophecy of popularizing Negro music. It is little wonder, then, that his originality continues to hold relevance into the 21st century. Beyond inspiring nationwide comfort songs such as "Goin' Home" in the early 20th century, the symphony also influenced the rise of modern music genres. Specifically, similarities shine between *From the New World*'s fourth movement and the film score of the 1975 world-renowned thriller *Jaws*.

In only three years, while living abroad in a foreign country and leaving his family and hometown in Bohemia, Dvořák and his symphony completely transformed American music, building it from a struggling, nearly inconspicuous aspect of American society to an innovative symbol of national progress. As scholar, musicologist, and critic Henry Krehbiel wrote, "Only a genius of Dvořák's caliber could have written a symphony like this… Only a musician capable of transmuting the raw material which has so long been ignored because of its humble origin into symphonic gold could have made so lovely and convincing an argument as Dr. Dvorak has made."[125] Most importantly, Dvořák established a distinctly American musical identity: an innovative and original art that coalesced the diverse elements of the nation's musical and cultural heritage and thereby paved the way for the next generation of American pioneers.

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