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Dvořák and James: Pragmatism and the Music of America's Fin de Siècle

Matthew F. Reese
College of William and Mary

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Dvořák and James: Pragmatism and the Music of America's *Fin de Siècle*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in Music

by

Matthew Frerking Reese

Accepted for

(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

James I. Armstrong, Director (Music)

Tuska Benes (History)

Chandos Brown (History)

Katherine Preston (Music)

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A note on accents and spelling: Antonín Dvořák’s name was spelled several different ways in contemporary correspondence and publications. Often Antonín was rendered without an accent, or Germanized as Anton (sometimes by the composer himself). American newspapers and other institutions often began recording Dvořák’s name without any accents at all. Some organizations, such as the Boston Symphony, gradually applied the acute accent first and then the caron or *háček*. With the one notable exception of Dvořák’s correspondence with Brahms (where Dvořák ceased to Germanize his name, and began to include the accents as their friendship developed), I do not believe there was any reason for the exclusion of the accents other than typographical convenience. As a result I have standardized the spelling of the composer’s name throughout, even in quotes where accents do not occur in the manuscript. In a few other places, English authors are cited. British-English spellings have been Americanized for consistency’s sake, except in the case of titles.

Introduction

In 1892, Jeannette M. Thurber, founder of the National Conservatory of Music of America, invited Antonín Dvořák to lead the artistic direction of her school. There were obvious benefits to Dvořák's selection. He was already an established composer, conductor and pedagogue and his presence would bolster the reputation of a young institution. Even more important, Dvořák was a nationalist composer, whose focus in a characteristically Czech musical vocabulary could serve as an example to young American composers. Thurber envisioned a vibrant, independent, and self-sustaining American school of composition. Dvořák could be an invaluable asset in defining the musical characteristics of that movement. There were obvious philosophical concords between the two, especially their belief in national music and a democratic access to art.

But there was an equally important—albeit unexpressed—dynamic at play: As a politically disenfranchised Czech outside the Austro-German lineage, Dvořák was freed from fraught aesthetic debates. The composer drew liberally from the Absolute and Programmatic camps, and produced a varied body of work that defied easy classification. In the United States, Dvořák employed a variety of national-compositional languages, giving musical expression to complex Bohemian, cosmopolitan and American identities. And as an instructor, Dvořák exhorted his students to new, individual artistic expression.

In short, Dvořák was a musical pragmatist. He was willing to draw from a variety of aesthetic and national camps, and to produce without strict adherence to any single philosophy. This unspoken reality of Dvořák's music was, in part, what made his American years so successful. Dvořák's compositional independence and predisposition to action and production strongly aligned him with the American *Zeitgeist*.

An Historical Overview of Dvořák Scholarship

There have been several periods of Dvořák scholarship since the composer's death in 1904, each reflecting unique political and academic circumstances. Beginning in 1919, the composer's Bohemian-American secretary, Josef Jan Kovařík (1870-1951) produced several colorful—and at times hagiographic—biographical sketches of his mentor.¹ Kovařík's defense of the Czech composer is unsurprising given the context of the 1911-1915 “Dvořák Battles,” a period of intense criticism led by the socialist musicologist, Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878-1962) and his Hostinský School.² In the following years, a generation of German-born authors evaluated Dvořák through a different, but still critical lens. For instance, in 1928, the German-Czech, Karel Hoffmeister (1868-1952) demonstrated many of the Austro-German prejudices against Dvořák and his repertory: Hoffmeister admired the Bohemian composer's “naïveté” and invention, but perceived none of the learnedness that characterized Dvořák's German peers.³

By the 1950s and 1960s, both European and American scholars began to produce large-scale biographies of Dvořák. The first concerted attempt to reproduce some of the composer's correspondence and writings was published in 1954 by one of Czechoslovakia's preeminent musicologists, Otakar Šourek (1883-1956). Šourek's contribution was considerable, and many of Kovařík's *Reminiscences*, which appear not

¹ These come in the form of articles, as well as correspondence with journalists and historians. For the latter, see Otakar Dvořák and Paul J. Polansky, *Antonín Dvořák, My Father* (Spillville, IA: Czech Historical Research Center, 1993). Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate any of Kovařík's newspaper or magazine articles in their original form. The first English-language account by Kovařík appears to be “Dr. Dvořák As I Knew Him,” in *Fiddlestrings* 1/3, 1919. Otakar Šourek regularly cited Kovařík's *Reminiscences*, but I have been unable to find any such text published in English.

² Marta Ottlová, “The ‘Dvořák Battles’ in Bohemia: Czech Criticism of Antonín Dvořák, 1911-1915” in *Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries*, ed. David R. Beveridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 125. Otakar Hostinský (1847-1910) was a Bohemian musicologist, professor of aesthetics and an avid supporter of Smetana.

³ Karel Hoffmeister, *Antonín Dvořák*, trans. Rosa Newmarch (London: John Lane, 1928; repr. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1970).

to have been published in English, are readily available only through Šourek's compilation.

However, his editorial process was problematic: Only a decade removed from Nazi occupation, and living under a Czech Communist regime, Šourek had an understandable tendency to selective editing, portraying Dvořák as a sort of Czech national hero.⁴ In his transcription of correspondence, especially between Dvořák and Brahms, Šourek excised entire passages that betrayed an imbalance of social or political power between the Bohemian composer and his Austrian and German peers.⁵

In 1966 and 1979 the British musicologist, John Clapham (1908-1992) authored *Antonín Dvořák: Musician and Craftsman* and *Dvořák*, respectively.⁶ These two texts represent some of the most comprehensive works of English-language Dvořák scholarship. Clapham's half-century of work, both in books and scholarly journals, laid the foundation for a generation of American and British authors.

Beginning in 1981, Milan Kuna⁷ led a team of Czech musicologists in producing the first critical edition of the complete correspondence of Antonín Dvořák. *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence A Dokumenty: Kritické Vydání* appeared in three thoroughly

⁴ Antonín Dvořák and Otakar Šourek, *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsour (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 11. In his preface to *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, Šourek explains his intention to "illustrate by means of *documents, excerpts from memoirs* and *letters* written by Dvořák's contemporaries or by himself how altogether unique was the *life* of this artistic genius in its imposing rise from the humblest of Czech origins to the towering significance of an artist admired and honored by the whole world, a life whose course is all the more remarkable when we consider how unassuming in its simple humanity, yet at the same time how inexpressibly noble, straightforward and pure was the *character* of its hero." When Šourek published this collection in 1954, Zdeněk Nejedlý was still involved in anti-Dvořák writing. Also reacting to this varying neglect and criticism, the composer's son, Otakar Dvořák (1885-1961) completed his own manuscript titled *Antonín Dvořák, My Father* in 1961. (It remained unpublished until 1993). A whole section is dedicated to "Father's Critics."

⁵ For instance, Dvořák's use of the address *Euer Wohlgeboren* ("your Nobleness") is conspicuously absent from Šourek's reproduction of these letters.

⁶ John Clapham, *Antonín Dvořák: Musician and Craftsman* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966); John Clapham, *Dvořák* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979).

⁷ Member of the Institute for Musicology of the Czechoslovak (now Czech) Academy of Sciences in Prague and chief editor of the institute's journal.

researched series, published between 1987 and 2001. Between 1991 and 1995, there was a surge of American-written Dvořák scholarship centered on the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth and the centennial of his Directorship at the National Conservatory in New York. In 1993 the American journalist and broadcaster, John C. Tibbetts, compiled a hefty *Festschrift* to Clapham following the Dvořák Sesquicentennial Conference and Festival in New Orleans.⁸ This text brings together articles from some of England and America's foremost scholars, but suffers from factual errors.

That same year, Michael Beckerman (then at Washington University in St. Louis) produced the excellent collection of essays, *Dvořák and His World*.⁹ In 1996, the Sesquicentennial Festival's Director, David Beveridge published *Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries*, a collection of essays reevaluating the composer's relationship with the United States, nationalism, and programmatic composition.¹⁰

Most recently in 2005 and 2012, the American author, Joseph Horowitz, has addressed the context of late-nineteenth century American musical life in both *Classical Music in America* and *Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America's Fin de Siècle*.¹¹

Much has been written on Dvořák's tenure in New York. Much has been written on the musical culture of the American *fin de siècle* and the moral imperatives of art and music in that period. But there is little literature that situates Dvořák specifically in the context of the American philosophical *Zeitgeist*—with its interest in pragmatism, action,

⁸ John C. Tibbetts, ed., *Dvořák in America: 1892-1895* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993).

⁹ Michael Beckerman, ed., *Dvořák and His World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹⁰ David Beveridge, ed., *Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Programmatic music is instrumental composition that draws on extra-musical associations for its interpretation. For instance, a piano piece with an evocative, literary title, or an entirely instrumental symphony which is meant to evoke the narrative of a published program.

¹¹ Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005); Joseph Horowitz, *Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

and self-actualization in spite of the restrictions of birth. It is my hope that this essay will help provide a new way of looking at Dvořák in America.

I intend to argue that one of the greatest factors in Dvořák's American success was his placement within the dominant American philosophical discourse. Dvořák was a cultural democrat, he was a self-made man, and most of all he was a personal and compositional pragmatist in a time when American philosophers were beginning to speak about pragmatism as the great American contribution to philosophy. Dvořák and William James never met during the Bohemian composer's American sojourn, but the practical realities of Dvořák's tenure, teaching, and composition achieve new meaning through the lens of Jamesian pragmatism. The variety of Dvořák's compositional *oeuvre*, and his ability to fluctuate between Bohemian, cosmopolitan and American musical idioms contributed in large part to the success of his American career.

Arriving at a Definition of Success

Success is a problematic term, and I do not intend to make its definition a crux of my discussion. The assertion that Dvořák's success in the United States was in many ways a product of the composer's personal pragmatism is more a framing device. Far more interesting is a discussion of how Dvořák's composition and pedagogy *reflect* that philosophy, how the composer thought of himself in philosophical terms, and what ramifications that had for his tenure.

That being said, if we presuppose that Dvořák's American years were successful, how are we to define that success? Length of tenure, value of remuneration, completion and performance of new works, favorable reviews in the press, positive reminiscences by pupils and colleagues, as well as invitations to guest-conductorships might all serve as

indicators. Dvořák's own impressions, reflected in letters and public articles give us another lens. The New York press, for instance, enthusiastically reported the prospect of Dvořák's employment: They announced his official engagement by the National Conservatory, his arrival, and recorded the various welcome functions presented in his honor. The composer received a tremendous inaugural performance on 21 October 1892, in which he was lauded as a musical genius, and invested with the guidance of a generation of young American composers. The *New York Herald* observed,

Dr. Antonín Dvořák had good reason for satisfaction with both the quantity and the quality of the reception accorded him last night at the Carnegie Music Hall, upon the occasion of his first appearance before an American audience. As a composer whose works have already become classical he was hailed with enthusiasm which knew no difference of clime or [of] nationality, while as the man who had forsaken his own land to adopt another, and give to its National Conservatory the impress and power of his musical genius, he was greeted with a royal welcome such [as] is not often accorded to an individual... Dr. Dvořák will not soon forget his reception when he advanced to take his place at the conductor's desk. The members of the orchestra rose as one man and played a *tusch*, while the audience cheered the composer to the echo.¹²

The largely positive reports of this debut set a tone for Dvořák's American tenure.

While Dvořák would occasionally receive tepid reviews for a specific piece or—in the case of the *New York Times*—for the quality of his conducting, his tenure was generally appreciated as “beneficial for [American] art.”^{13, 14}

¹² Anon., “Antonín Dvořák Leads at Music Hall,” *New York Herald*, 22 October 1892, pg. 6.

¹³ Anon., “Amusements, Dr. Dvořák Introduced,” *New York Times*, 22 October 1892.

¹⁴ By comparison, on 1 January 1908, thirteen years after Dvořák's departure from New York, the Austrian composer, Gustav Mahler made his New York debut with the Metropolitan Opera. In the three years that Mahler was associated the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera, his tenure was marred by contract disputes, arguments with administration and musicians, and critical reviews. Mahler died on 18 May 1911, just weeks after his final departure from New York. The German-American critic, Henry Krehbiel bellowed in the *New York Tribune*: “He was looked upon as a great artist, and possibly he was one, but he failed to convince the people of New York of the fact, and therefore his American career was not a success.” (Cited from Joseph Horowitz, “On Mahler in New York,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 January 1999). Krehbiel's statements caused considerable controversy in New York and abroad, and certainly this understanding of Mahler's tenure was not universal, but contemporary correspondence as well as Mahler's own letters portray a troubled American tenure nonetheless.

We may consider Dvořák's American career using other indicators of success: Dvořák completed his contractual agreements and signed on for a second term, directing the National Conservatory for nearly three academic years. He secured a tremendous salary of \$15,000 *per annum* with four months of vacation.¹⁵ He also composed a considerable number of works during this period, finishing a symphony, a concerto, four other orchestral works, a cantata, four chamber works, ten piano pieces, an opera revision, an orchestration, and ten biblical songs.¹⁶

Dvořák also became close friends with his peers in the press (Henry Krehbiel) and in the concert hall (Anton Seidl). He was widely performed, and during his tenure at the National Conservatory he created lasting friendships with—and left lasting influences on—the young men under his tutelage, including Rubin Goldmark and Maurice Arnold Strothotte (1865-1937).¹⁷ Dvořák's professional influence had lasting benefits for his student-assistant at the National Conservatory, the African-American baritone and composer, Harry T. Burleigh.¹⁸ Dvořák mentions Burleigh in his letters and selected the young man as the baritone soloist in a Conservatory performance of Dvořák's orchestration of Stephen Foster's *Old Folks at Home*. Dvořák's advocacy of Burleigh as a performer was valuable as the young man entered the professional world, taking up a soloist position at Holy Trinity (Episcopal), New York, under the directorship of the

¹⁵ Anon., "Musical Notes," *New York Times*, 8 May 1892.

¹⁶ See Appendix A: Works Composed by Antonín Dvořák between 1892 and 1895, During His Tenure at the National Conservatory.

¹⁷ Thomas L. Riis, "Dvořák and his Black Students" in *Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries*, David Beveridge, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 268. Will Marion Cook also studied under the Bohemian composer, but appears to have had a less fulfilling experience.

¹⁸ Burleigh's association with the Symphony No. 9 "From the New World" derives from an evocative but apparently apocryphal story in which Burleigh sang spirituals to Dvořák in the composer's studio. While these claims are hard to substantiate, it is true that Burleigh was instrumental in introducing Dvořák to much of the African-American musical heritage.

composer, Horatio Parker.¹⁹ In this case, we see the Bohemian composer's success as a pedagogue reflected in the career of one his pupils.

Another indication of the success of Dvořák's tenure might be the reticence with which he resigned from the post. Homesickness and the difficulty of family life intervened in Dvořák's plan to return to the United States. The family's 73-year-old grandmother was unable to continue raising four of the six children in Prague. Furthermore Dvořák's wife had acutely felt the absence of these four while in New York. That summer, their daughter Anna had contracted rheumatism and Aloisie, diphtheria, making travel essentially impossible. In his letter of resignation from the National Conservatory, Dvořák wrote to Jeannette M. Thurber,

It is with much regret to me to announce to you that I and my wife—having considered everything very carefully—we have come to the conclusion that we are not able to come back to New York, because our family circumstances have changed very much... Mrs. Thurber, you know well, how much I value your friendship, how much I admire your love for music, for its development you have done so much and therefore I may hope that you will agree with me and that you will kindly recognize and acknowledge all the above mentioned reasons. I beg herewith to submit to you.

With highly [*sic*] esteem I remain sincerely yours.

Certainly, Dvořák's American experience was not untroubled. Kovařík recounts the composer's lingering homesickness, especially in the first and third years of his tenure when he was removed from four of his six children. There were institutional problems as well. In spite of their philosophical concords, Thurber and Dvořák exchanged a tense correspondence when Thurber was unable to produce \$7,500 of the

¹⁹ William K Kearns, *Horatio Parker, 1863-1919 His Life, Music and Ideas* (Metuchen, N.J., and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1990), 14.

composer's salary in 1894.²⁰ Still, Dvořák's hesitance to resign suggests a tenure that was generally positive.²¹

In his May 1983 foreword to the *Correspondence Dispatched* series of *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence A Dokumenty: Kritické Vydání*, Dr. Milan Kuna suggests, “Dvořák was a sworn enemy of any empty phrase, insincerity and deception. Nothing in his letters (save a few very official ones) is at variance with his clear character and most sincere feelings.” If we read Dvořák's words to Thurber through the lens that Kuna suggests, we observe a sincere reluctance to leave the American post. Dvořák's esteem for Jeannette M. Thurber is evident through several years of exchange, but these last words of recognition reiterate a respect for Thurber as an educator. It seems unlikely that Dvořák would have been at such pains to explain his decision to resign, were his relationship with Thurber not one of deep respect. Dvořák admired Thurber's educational mission and her advocacy of American composition.

When considered in the context of these articles, letters and the chronology of Dvořák's performances, we can reasonably call his tenure a success. Dvořák was well-

²⁰ Antonín Dvořák to Jeannette Thurber, New York, 5 April 1895 in *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence A Dokumenty: Kritické Vydání*, Svazek 3, Korespondence Odeslaná: 1890-1895, Milan Kuna, ed. (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1989), 256. “I have waited till now but I am exceedingly sorry that circumstances force me to write to you, I must inform you I cannot wait no longer [*sic*]. I love the American people very much and it has been my desire to help Art in the United States, but the necessities of life go hand in hand with Art, and though I personally care very little for worldly things, I cannot see my wife and children in trouble. If circumstances are such that I cannot receive my salary according to the Contract I shall submit the case to the “Board of Trustees” and if I cannot have immediate attention from them I will publish my situation to the world. Without any other feeling then [*sic*] that of profound regrets, I beg you give this your immediate attention as it is absolutely impossible for me to wait any longer. A delay will force me to publish the situation which I would like to have kept secret.”

²¹ Josef Jan Kovařík to Margaret Balik, 1933 in Otakar Dvořák and Paul J. Polansky *Antonín Dvořák, My Father* (Spillville, IA: Czech Historical Research Center, 1993), 38. After his return to Bohemia, Dvořák remarked fondly of his time in New York and Spillville. In response to a query from Spillville native, Margaret Balik, Kovařík asserted: “Dvořák was not dissatisfied in New York [original emphasis]—just a bit homesick, especially the first and third years of his stay in America, for he brought only two of his six children with him the first year... The second year of his stay in America, when he had all of his children with him, he regarded, as he had on several occasions expressed himself, as one of the happiest years of his life—and that was the year when he spent his summer in Spillville.”

paid, he composed and orchestrated seventeen works, and was reviewed very favorably in many (though certainly not all) of the American papers. He developed strong relationships with his pupils and colleagues and conducted some of the finest orchestras in the country.

There were a host of practical reasons for Thurber's invitation and Dvořák's acceptance. The prestige of the Bohemian composer would bolster the reputation and visibility of the National Conservatory, and in return, Thurber was willing to grant Dvořák a generous salary and a position largely free from administrative concerns. We shall address these practical realities shortly. From that acknowledgement, we can begin to discuss the philosophical and personal concords that made Dvořák such a logical prospect, and that made his tenure a success. But in order to establish a connection between Dvořák and the tenor of contemporary American philosophy, we must first arrive at some definitions. Before we can analyze Dvořák in a broader culture of philosophical pragmatism, we must consider the much more precise meaning with which the Harvard philosopher, William James, used the word.

Pragmatism: Definitions and Developments

The word *pragmatism* in one of its first definitions as a methodology or philosophy dates to an 1865 translation of D. F. Strauss's *The New Life of Jesus*. Here, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, pragmatism is defined as

†2. A method of understanding facts and events in terms of cause and effect, and of inferring practical lessons or conclusions from this process.²²

²² The *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. pragmatism, n.: †2... 1865, tr. D. F. Strauss *New Life Jesus* I. Introd. ii. xvi. 126, "I have,... in my Life of Jesus, drawn attention... to the prophetic pragmatism of Matthew."; 1884, D. Hunter tr. E. Reuss *Hist. Canon* xv. 274, "According to the pragmatism of history, we should now turn our attention to the influence which the reforming movement of the sixteenth century exercised on the notion of the biblical canon."; 1894, F. Watson *Bk. Genesis* vi. 108, "The moulders and manipulators of facts, in the spirit of religious pragmatism."

This usage seems to be centered on religious thought and biblical scholarship. But there is another contemporary definition aligned with American philosophy:

4. a. *Philos.* The doctrine that an idea can be understood in terms of its practical consequences; hence, the assessment of the truth or validity of a concept or hypothesis according to the rightness or usefulness of its practical consequences. The method was first described by C. S. Peirce, and was soon adopted or elaborated by W. James, F. C. S. Schiller, and J. Dewey. Peirce then dissociated himself from this development, calling his method pragmatism.²³

Additional derivatives and forms of the word, such as *pragmatic*, *pragmatically*, and *pragmaticism* demonstrate the discussion of pragmatism in both religious and classical scholarship, philosophical thought and, to a lesser extent, literary criticism between the 1840s and 1880s.²⁴ Strictly philosophical uses of the word began in the early 1870s and William James's first published thoughts on pragmatism appeared in September 1898, when the *University Chronicle* reprinted an address given by James to the Philosophical Union at Berkeley on 26 August of that year.²⁵

In his opening remarks, James described how he first came in contact with Charles S. Peirce's theory of practicalism or pragmatism in the early 1870s at Cambridge, Massachusetts. To James, pragmatism was the "clue or compass" which in following he

²³ The *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. pragmatism, n.: 4. a. *Philos.* 1898, W. James *Philos. Concept. & Pract. Results* 5, "The principle of practicalism or pragmatism, as he [sc. C. S. Peirce] called it, when I first heard him enunciate it at Cambridge [Mass.] in the early '70s, is the clue... by following which... we may keep our feet upon the proper trail."; 1906, *Academy* 4 Aug. 106/1, "The most recent and (philosophically speaking) fashionable 'ism' that the new century has produced—known, by some as Humanism, and by others as Pragmatism."

²⁴ The *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. pragmatic, *adj.* and *n.*:

A. 4. Treating facts or events systematically, with reference both to their relationship in cause and effect and to the practical conclusions or lessons which they suggest, rather than to their circumstantial details.

A. 5. Dealing with matters in accordance with practical rather than theoretical considerations or general principles; aiming at what is achievable rather than ideal; matter-of-fact, practical, down-to-earth (sometimes with implications of hard-headedness, lack of principle, or self-seekingness):

A. 6. a. *Philos.* Belonging or relating to philosophical pragmatism; concerned with practical consequences or values: 1902, W. James *Varieties Relig. Experience* 518, "This thoroughly 'pragmatic' view of religion has usually been taken as a matter of course by common men."

²⁵ Since James's first *published* remarks on pragmatism date from three years after Dvořák's departure, I have found it necessary to demonstrate that uses of the word in a philosophical or intellectual vein were still very prevalent and long-standing, even before Dvořák's arrival in 1892.

found himself “more and more confirmed in believing we may keep our feet upon the proper trail.”²⁶ Peirce originally published his philosophy in the January 1878 edition of *Popular Science Monthly*. James paraphrased it in the following way:

The soul and meaning of thought, [Peirce] says, can never be made to direct itself towards anything but the production of belief, belief being the demicadence which closes a musical phrase in the symphony of our intellectual life. Thought in movement has thus for its only possible motive the attainment of thought at rest. But when our thought about an object has found its rest in belief, then our action on the subject can firmly and safely begin. Beliefs, in short, are really rules for action; and the whole function of thinking is but one step in the production of habits of action.²⁷

Both James and Peirce were concerned less with the intangible nature of specific beliefs or philosophies, than with the practical consequences of people’s actions, driven by those beliefs. James would utilize these ideas later in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*.²⁸

James delivered a more complete expostulation of his own pragmatic theory between 1906 and 1907, through a series of lectures at the Lowell Institute in Boston and Columbia University in New York. In April 1907, he published these eight lectures in a collection titled *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. In Lecture II, “What Pragmatism Means.” James explained that

The pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable. Is the world one or many?—fated or free?—material or spiritual?—here are notions either of which may or may not hold good of the world; and disputes over such notions are unending. The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is

²⁶ William James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” in *The University Chronicle*, Vol. I, No. 4, September 1898, 290.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902).

idle. Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show some practical difference that must follow from one side or the other's being right.²⁹

During the *fin de siècle*, a period in which so much of artistic and cultural life was dominated by philosophy and polemics, James offered a much simpler, older way of thinking: Any philosophical notion could be evaluated by tracing its respective practical consequences. In a broader musical interpretation, we might evaluate a specific composition in terms of its internal construction and its effect upon the listener, rather than in terms of the aesthetic philosophy to which it conforms. Similarly, the pragmatic composer would demonstrate an ability to change his aesthetic focus, his compositional forms, and even his national material without feeling constrained to a particular "school." I hope to demonstrate Dvořák's pragmatic approaches in both these realms.

The Personal Link: James, Higginson and Dvořák

William James's own writings on music are sparse and mostly in the form of anecdote. While they are mostly ambivalent towards concert life, James's comments situate him in a cultural milieu similar to that of Antonín Dvořák. James was an old friend of the Harvard Professor and composer, John Knowles Paine (1839-1906), and in the late 1870s, attended concerts by the conductor, Theodore Thomas (1835-1905).³⁰ Fifteen years later in 1893, Dvořák conducted Theodore Thomas's Festival Orchestra at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago.

There is no evidence that Dvořák and William James ever met personally. James was on faculty at Harvard from 1873 to 1907 and he spent most of these years in

²⁹ William James, Lecture II "What Pragmatism Means," from *Pragmatism in Pragmatism: In Focus*, ed. Doris Olin (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 39.

³⁰ William James, *The Letters of William James*, Vol. 4 (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), 534. Letter to Catherine Elizabeth Havens, Boston 22 February 1876. "My friend here J. K. Paine professor of music, the best and simplest of men has just been having his new symphony bro't out by Theod. Thomas. I suppose it will be performed in N.Y. If it is I wish you might hear it and tell me what you think of it."

Cambridge and the surrounding area. James does not mention Dvořák in any of his correspondence, nor does William James appear in Dvořák's American letters. But the absence of a direct personal connection should not overshadow the evidence of a broader intellectual link: Dvořák and James inhabited similar intellectual realms. Anecdotal evidence attests to Dvořák's avid reading of the New York papers, and to his interest in current continental philosophy.³¹ Even so, there is a mutual personal connection with the Boston stockbroker, and founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Major Henry Lee Higginson. Higginson was not only a long-time family friend of James, but was also involved in the estate of James's father, and was the philosopher's primary financial advisor.³² These connections situate Dvořák, Higginson and James in similar cultural circles, with some actual social overlap. Moreover, the composer's name had long been familiar to the concert-going public.

Dvořák was not unknown in Boston—in fact, his assertion that the future of American Music lay in “negro melodies” caused considerable controversy there. The Boston Symphony Orchestra gave the American premier of Dvořák's Symphony No. 8 in G Major on 27 February 1892, eight months prior to his American arrival.³³ Between 1892 and 1893, the orchestra gave the Boston premiers of both the Dramatic Overture, *Husitska (Hussite)*³⁴ and the Symphony No. 9 in E minor, “From the New World.” The

³¹ Josef Michl, “Z Dvořákova vyprávění” in Dvořák, Antonín, and Otakar Šourek, *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsourm (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 170. Dvořák's interest in the Wagner-Nietzsche debate, for instance is chronicled by one of his students.

³² William James, *The Letters of William James*, Vol. 5 (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), 394. Henry Lee Higginson to Henry James, Boston 13 January 1883. He would remark in 1883, “never think twice of your money matters, & never hesitate to ask me to do what lies in my power.”

³³ Op. 88, B. 163, composed 1889.

³⁴ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Twelfth Season 1892-93: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1892), 183. Performed on 24 and 26 November 1892. Op. 67, B. 132, composed 1883.

latter was performed on 29 and 30 December 1893, just weeks after the 16 December world premier in New York.³⁵

On 28 September 1893 Dvořák conducted his 149th Psalm and the *Hussite Overture* at the Worcester, Massachusetts Festival.³⁶ On New Years Day 1894, Dvořák's String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, "American" was given its world premier in Boston by the Kneisel Quartet, all of whom were members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.³⁷

The Boston musical elite would have been well acquainted with Dvořák's music, and while I have been unable to find direct correspondence between Henry Lee Higginson and Dvořák, it is very likely they had been introduced. The Boston Symphony performed in New York several times during the composer's tenure. Higginson's orchestra gave Dvořák's works one American and at least three Boston premiers. The BSO appears to have performed the Symphony No. 9 in E Minor from the manuscript score, something that, as the orchestra's founder, principle donor and administrator, Higginson may well have authorized.³⁸ Certainly, Higginson would have come into contact with Dvořák when the composer conducted the Boston Symphony and the Cecilia Society in a joint concert of his Requiem.³⁹ But there was yet another connection between the two men:

³⁵ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893), 327. Op. 95, B. 178, composed 1893.

³⁶ Psalm 149, Op. 79, B. 154, composed 1887.

³⁷ Tibbetts, 14-19. Op. 96, B. 179, composed 1893.

³⁸ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893), 327. The letters (MS.) appear adjacent to the title of the piece. As it was just weeks after the world premier in New York, it is likely that this parenthetical indicates use of the manuscript score.

³⁹ Clapham, 117. "When the Cecilia Society and Boston Symphony Orchestra combined to perform the requiem mass, he directed the public rehearsal for workers on the 29th and the performance 'for the wealthy and intelligentsia' on 30 November. The composer was frequently applauded between numbers and given a most enthusiastic ovation at the end." The *Boston Daily Globe* does confirm Dvořák's performance of his Requiem with the Cecilia Society of Boston, but does not mention the Boston Symphony as the orchestra (Anon., "Musical Offerings," *Boston Daily Globe*, 13 November 1892, pg. 9).

Dvořák's American concert debut in New York was introduced by the author and former colonel, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a distant cousin of Boston's Major Henry Lee Higginson.⁴⁰ Henry Lee was present in the audience.

Dvořák's reflection of a pragmatist ethos was not dependent on his personal acquaintance with its exponents. But this narration of concert attendance and programming aims to demonstrate the physical and cultural proximity of Dvořák and Henry Lee Higginson, and by extension, the Harvard philosopher, William James. Pragmatic approaches to art are apparent in the writings of several contemporary critics, impresarios and academics. These are tied to conceptions of an active, practical American manhood, the nature of which is evident in contemporary accounts of Dvořák, newspaper articles relating to the composer, and in later reminiscences of his peers and students.

In his comments at Carnegie Hall on 21 October 1892, Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson employed rhetoric of discovery to discuss Dvořák's artistic potential in the United States:

It is fitting that music should take her part in the great [Columbian] festival because music is the only art which, since Columbus, has also discovered

An investigation of the 1892 Boston Symphony Orchestra concert programs, as well as correspondence with the Symphony's current Archivist, Bridget Carr, suggests that the BSO has not (even until today) performed the Requiem. However, as the BSO would have been hired out to accompany the Cecilia Society, the concert would not appear in the BSO's subscription series.

⁴⁰ John C. Tibbetts, "Dvořák's New York: An American Street Scene," in *Dvořák in America: 1892-1895*, John C. Tibbetts, ed. (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993). In this article, John C. Tibbetts causes some confusion by observing of Dvořák's American premier that "this particular evening [21 October 1892] there had been a grandiose oration delivered by Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, founder of the Boston Symphony" (Tibbetts, 41). This is, of course, inaccurate: Henry Lee Higginson founded the BSO. The orator, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson was a distant cousin of "Major" (though he had in fact received a wartime promotion to Colonel) Henry Lee Higginson, founder of the Boston Symphony. The confusion no doubt arises from a letter dated 27 December 1892 in which Dvořák observed of the Boston Symphony, "the orchestra was founded by a local millionaire, Colonel Higginson, who gave a big speech at my first concert (a thing unheard of here), spoke of my coming to America and the purpose to be served by my stay here" (Tibbetts, 390). Dvořák, relatively new to America made an understandable mistake: While the BSO was indeed founded by a Colonel Higginson (though for the obvious reason, he went by Major) it was not Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson. A *New York Times* listing on 9 October 1892 confirms that it was indeed Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson and not Major Henry Lee Higginson who gave the inaugural speech at Carnegie Hall on 21 October.

a new world. We meet to celebrate that newer discovery, to lay upon the bier of Columbus the only wreath that has wholly blossomed since his time: the one art that is post-Columbian...⁴¹

The triumphs of our own land in music, like most of our artistic triumphs, lie in the future, if anywhere. If we were all made of unmixed English blood, we might have long to wait for them. Moreover the material successes must come first... But we shall not always be thus one sided, and, moreover, we are not all of English blood. We stand in one of the great German cities of the world and the other great musical race of Europe is making our very byways Italian.

And we draw to-night on that wondrous country where, it used to be said, every child was tested early in the cradle to see whether he would choose the violin bow or the rifle with his baby hand, the country which has so identified itself with the fire of genius that Boyle O'Reilly makes the burden of his best lyric run thus:—

‘I had rather live in Bohemia
Than in any other land.’

Let us hope that our guest to-night [Dvořák] will at least not share this opinion, that he may consent to transplantation and help add the new world of music to the continent which Columbus found.⁴²

In Higginson's speech, as well as the substantial *New York Herald* article that relates it, we can focus in on two key themes: action and the flexibility of nationality. If pragmatic philosophy focuses on action as opposed to contemplation, the association of musical advance with Columbus's discovery of the New World places art music at the forefront of cultural change. Furthermore, Higginson praises the future of a polyglot and multi-ethnic America, one in which the exchange of cultures promotes artistic triumph—at least more than would be possible in a country of “unmixed English blood.” With this, he hints at the personal pragmatism with which Dvořák would embody Bohemian, cosmopolitan, and American national identities through his music.

From his arrival in the United States, peers, scholars, and critics addressed Dvořák in philosophical and aesthetic terms. Certainly, Dvořák's philosophical

⁴¹ Higginson's chronology of Western classical music is flawed: There had been several hundred years of musical development prior to 1492.

⁴² Anon., “Antonín Dvořák Leads at Music Hall,” *New York Herald*, 22 October 1892, 6. Since they do not appear to be quoted elsewhere in full, I have reproduced all the sections of Higginson's speech that were recorded by the *Herald*. See Appendix B: Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson's Oration.

similarities to Jeannette M. Thurber were significant in his engagement at the National Conservatory. Thurber was a cultural democrat and an artistic nationalist, deeply interested in the cultivation of an independent and self-sustaining American music. To this end, she founded two institutions, an opera company and a conservatory, guided their administration and even financed their deficits largely with her own funds.

Practical Considerations

Dvořák's Appeal to the National Conservatory

The daughter of a Danish concert violinist and the wife of the wealthy grocery magnate Francis Beattie Thurber, Jeannette M. Thurber founded The National Conservatory of Music of America in 1885. In 1886, in conjunction with the National Conservatory, Thurber also established the short-lived American Opera Company, an organization dedicated to the performance of English-language opera. The American Opera was conceived as a repertory company, with a regular, salaried staff of versatile American singers. It was intended to encourage American composers to work more actively in opera and build a national repertoire, while avoiding the *prima donna* culture that characterized many European companies.

While the American Opera closed due to financial difficulty after a season, the spirit of the company continued through its larger and more stable sister institution, the National Conservatory of Music. The conservatory was an impressively egalitarian institution. It posted advertisements for auditions in newspapers and concert programs around the country, eager to draw a geographically diverse faculty and student body. From its inception, the conservatory instructed the blind, gave scholarships to women and minorities, and was especially interested in increasing the number of black musicians.

Thurber was invested in creating an American school of composition, and her institution was anchored in deeply nationalist and populist ideals. At the thirty-year anniversary of the school's founding, Prof. Henry T. Finck observed of Thurber:

Passionately fond of music and a critical student of the art, she has for years devoted her means to helping talented, struggling musicians to help themselves; and when the demands outgrew her individual ability, she conceived the idea of establishing a National Conservatory of Music in the United States similar to those of European countries, where instruction of the highest class might be obtained at a moderate cost, or free, if need be, where exceptional talent was found to exist without the means necessary for its cultivation.⁴³

As a composer of nationalist music, and a man of humble origins who had personally benefitted from state arts stipends, Dvořák was aligned with the Conservatory's aims both pedagogically and biographically. In addition, the Bohemian composer was widely recognized and at the height of his career. In the previous decade, Dvořák's works had been performed extensively in both England and Austria-Hungary. In 1889, Dvořák had accepted a post as professor of composition at the Prague Conservatory, and his position as a continental composer, conductor, and pedagogue promised to bolster the reputation of Thurber's conservatory as a place of comprehensive music study. Like many such organizations, Thurber's conservatory was initially organized with only one department—voice—to help train singers for her American Opera Company. It was under these auspices that the Belgian baritone, Jacques-Joseph-André Bouhy (1848-1929) was engaged as the first Director. But after Bouhy's return to the French stage, Thurber was in need of a musician who would bring both pedagogical experience and caché to the academy. Dvořák offered that experience, and there was a

⁴³ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Thirty Years of the National Conservatory of America: 1885-1915* (New York: The National Conservatory of Music of America, 1916), 4.

ready channel for negotiations; Dvořák's English publisher, Alfred Henry Littleton, head of Novello & Co. in London, would serve as intermediary.

There were philosophical concords as well. Thurber was primarily interested in Dvořák's position as a national composer. By this period, Dvořák had already had six operas performed professionally in Prague.⁴⁴ All of these were written in Czech, and several were centered on traditional Bohemian stories.⁴⁵ Dvořák had composed dozens of orchestral and piano works with Czech programmatic titles, as well as several song cycles on Czech texts.⁴⁶ Dvořák had represented his Bohemian homeland through an extensive compositional repertoire. In an American institution, he could encourage his students to represent their own nation in the same way.

The National Conservatory's Appeal to Dvořák

Dvořák did not accept his American position purely for reasons of philosophical agreement. Dvořák was offered more than twenty-five times his salary at the Prague Conservatory, a sum of some \$15,000 *per annum* (he even lobbied for \$20,000).⁴⁷

Moreover, the National Conservatory was offering him a promotion. Dvořák was Professor of Composition at the Prague Conservatory but he still served under the

⁴⁴ There were seven productions if one counts a substantially revised, third version of *Král a uhlíř*, B. 151 completed in 1887. The first version (B. 21) was never performed. The second version (B. 42) was premiered on 24 November 1874.

⁴⁵ *Král a uhlíř* (*The King and the Charcoal Burner*, premiered 1874), *Vanda* (premiered 1876), *Šelma sedlák* (*The Cunning Peasant*, premiered 1878), *Tvrdé palice* (*The Stubborn Lovers*, premiered 1881), *Dimitrij* (premiered 1882) and *Jakobín* (*The Jacobin*, premiered 1889).

⁴⁶ See Appendix C: Works Composed by Antonín Dvořák before 1892 with Czech Programmatic Titles or on Czech Texts.

⁴⁷ The American papers reported Dvořák's salaries with amusing regularity. The \$15,000 figure is mentioned several times by the *New York Times*. (Anon., "What Dvořák Has Done: The Great Bohemian Composer to Teach Here," *New York Times*, 16 October 1892). The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reports this number in comparison to his first earnings of 120 florins (\$50), and first stipend of 500 florins (\$200) (Anon., "Dvořák Has Arrived," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 August 1893, 4). One *Times* article even assessed it comparatively: "Mr. Bazzini, chief of the Milan Conservatoire is paid a salary of only \$1,200 per annum. Dvořák will receive more than five times that sum at the National Conservatory of New-York." (Anon., "Live Musical Topics," *New York Times*, 19 June 1892).

administrative directorship Josef Tragy, Managing Director of the Prague Association for the Promotion of Music. In New York, Dvořák's title would be Artistic Director and Professor of Composition and his teaching duties would run commensurate with his titular directorship of the entire institution—Dvořák was courted for the post. Upon his acceptance, Thurber invited the Bohemian composer to prepare a cantata for his inaugural concert. Across the country, in newspaper advertisements and program inserts, Thurber actively published Dvořák's name as the recently secured artistic director of her institution. Finally, we must consider the excited terms in which Dvořák's arrival was discussed by the press. The *New York Herald* gushed over Dvořák's inaugural American concert. But even in the *Times*, where praise was more sparing, Dvořák received a welcome he would have been unlikely to get in Vienna or Berlin:

The arrival in this country of so distinguished a musician as Dr. Antonín Dvořák, who reached New-York a fortnight ago, has naturally created great interest among professors and lovers of the tone art. Dr. Dvořák has come to assume the direction of the National Conservatory of Music in East Seventeenth Street, and its chief patron, Mrs. Jeannette Thurber, is to be congratulated on her success in securing his valuable services. He ranks with Johannes Brahms, the German and Peter Tchaikowsky, the Russian, as one of the three foremost living composers of instrumental music, and is one of the most admirable representatives of what is known as the romantic school of composers.⁴⁸

To be sure, Dvořák's works were regularly performed and published in Austria-Hungary and the German Empire. He was well respected by many German friends and peers. But the enthusiasm of Dvořák's American audience and the respect they would accord him in the press almost certainly exceeded any such reception on the Continent. Dvořák's position in New York was considerably grander than anything he was likely enjoy as a Bohemian in Austria-Hungary. At home, Dvořák's political

⁴⁸ Anon., "What Dvořák Has Done: The Great Bohemian Composer to Teach Here" *New York Times*, 16 October 1892.

disenfranchisement had ramifications for the daily practicalities of business and publishing, as well as his compositional materials and the critical estimation of his works.

While Dvořák's Bohemian identity did not dominate the entirety of his *oeuvre* prior to 1892, he was indeed a musical nationalist, steeped in Czech and pan-Slavonic melodies, rhythms, and poetic texts.⁴⁹ But Dvořák's artistic nationalism did not generally translate into politics, and there is not evidence that Dvořák ever harbored secessionist sympathies. Dvořák was a devout Catholic, a beneficiary of the Austro-Hungarian establishment (in the form of several artist stipends) and a personal conservative in spite of his political disenfranchisement under the Dual Monarchy.

Dvořák's compositional and pedagogical debt to the German classical masters marked him as an inheritor of the Austro-German tradition, but his Bohemian identity precluded him from being its promulgator. By virtue of their language and nationality, Brahms and Wagner continued in this lineage. Dvořák did not.

Accordingly, Dvořák's compositional and pedagogical methods demonstrated an independence from the absolute and programmatic camps of the day.⁵⁰ I would suggest that Dvořák's willingness to draw freely from both Czech and foreign materials, his productivity in both absolute and programmatic composition, and his comfort in a more conservative idiom were inextricably linked to his nationality.⁵¹ These were the pragmatic approaches to source material and style that resonated so strongly with the American *Zetigeist* Dvořák encountered between 1892 and 1895.

⁴⁹ See Appendix C: Works Composed by Antonín Dvořák before 1892 with Czech Programmatic Titles or on Czech Texts.

⁵⁰ In contrast to *programmatic* music, which relies on extra-musical associations or published narratives for its interpretation, *absolute* composition (a term largely promoted by Jean Paul Richter and E.T.A. Hoffmann) is instrumental music composed without extra-musical associations.

⁵¹ In the loosest sense, the phrase "conservative idiom" refers to Dvořák's general (but not universal) preference for classical forms and aversion to the extended chromaticism of Wagner.

Dvořák the Pragmatist

Social and Cultural Realities for the Bohemian in Austria Hungary

An investigation of early German-language Dvořák scholarship, as well as contemporary correspondence is helpful in two ways: First, it allows us to substantiate the assertion that Dvořák's Bohemian identity precluded him from promulgating the Austro-German compositional lineage. Freed from Austro-German conceptions of learnedness as well as progressivism, Dvořák was able to allow more fluid lines of demarcation in his aesthetic styles. Second, these biographies and letters demonstrate a German discussion of the exact compositional traits that aligned Dvořák with pragmatism in the United States.

Discussion of Dvořák's compositional independence is evident in program notes from the 1890s and appears in 1904 obituaries of the composer. Even by the 1920s, the first generation of largely German biographers to chronicle the late Romantics still found this independence problematic.⁵² Among some German scholars, the difficulty inherent in Dvořák's style was the democratic appeal of compositions that did not conform to Austro-German musical values: Dvořák's music was not, they asserted, illustrative of German learnedness. Though he spent the better part of his career affiliated with conservatories, Dvořák did not enjoy a reputation as a learned composer. His German peers and friends remarked frequently on his lack of formal education, and this biographical observation guided scholars as they interpreted the aesthetic worth of

⁵² C. A. Ellis Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Season 1891-92*. (Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1892).

Dvořák's body of work, an evaluation closely tied to his form and the learnedness of his style.⁵³ As the musicologist Leon Botstein has observed,

... Dvořák's accessibility and popularity have remained linked to the critical estimation of his music. His music seemed *merely* beautiful. Dvořák's success, his appeal to the audiences of the *fin de siècle*, stemmed, in the view of critics both pro- and anti-Dvořák, from the fact that he was essentially "naïve," simple and spontaneous. These epithets mirrored, for both progressive and conservative critics, a pervasive culture of nostalgia.⁵⁴

Unsurprisingly, Dvořák's musical "nostalgia" was incongruent with the concept, propagated by some critics and scholars, of the progressive, teleological evolution of the German canon, moving from Bach to Beethoven to, depending on one's camp, Brahms or Wagner.⁵⁵ Indeed, the dominance of this idea of the canon was apparent even in the 1904 obituaries of the Czech composer. Richard Aldrich of *The New York Times* called Dvořák

the last of the naïve musicians, the direct descendant of Haydn, Mozart and Schubert, rejoicing in the self-sufficient beauty of his music and untroubled by the philosophic tendencies and the searching for new things to be said in a new way which animate the younger men of to-day.⁵⁶

Haydn, Mozart, and Schubert certainly count as canonic German composers, but in this usage, they represent a kind of compositional naïveté incongruent with the progressive

⁵³ David Beveridge, "Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, an Interpretation," in *Dvořák and His World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 76.

⁵⁴ Leon Botstein, "Reversing the Critical Tradition: Innovation, Modernity, and Ideology in the Work and Career of Antonín Dvořák," in *Dvořák and His World*, ed. Michael Brim Beckerman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 12.

⁵⁵ Botstein, 11. It must be acknowledged that as early as 1926, the German-American musicologist Paul Bekker critiqued this evolutionary approach to music history: "This mode of conceptualizing is the result of the fact that contemporary musical scholarship is a consequence of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century was, however, in all its perspectives dominated by Darwinian theories of evolution. The way in which this theory of evolution has been interpreted has doubtlessly led to a dangerous misunderstanding," namely that more recent or advanced music is aesthetically superior.

⁵⁶ Richard Aldrich, "Antonín Dvořák and His Music," *New York Times*, 8 May 1904, Magazine Section, pg. SM3. "... [But] his admirers... would have preferred to hear less of the obvious, less of the first impulse, and more of the reflection that shapes and finishes to perfection."

change led by Beethoven and Wagner's "new things... said in a new way."⁵⁷ Robert Hirschfeld of the *Wiener Abendpost* expressed this bluntly:

Dvořák did not stand in the great line of [German] historical evolution. He was a follower and stood to the side, a strong and shining personality who in his works gave voice to a national sensibility.⁵⁸

Partisans for Brahms or Wagner pointed to the absolute or programmatic elements of Beethoven's repertoire to prove an evolutionary link. Depending on one's aesthetic alignment, both of these men represented the progressive continuation of Beethoven's work. For all of his ability, Dvořák was excluded from this musical narrative. This independence was the subject of considerable, often critical scholarship. But it also liberated Dvořák to develop an artistic voice without strict adherence to the absolute or programmatic camps, and without (exclusive) duty to a Bohemian national narrative.

Even among Czech critics in the generation after his death, it was difficult to place Dvořák neatly in the taxonomies of absolute, programmatic, or national composition. The Czech-German critic Karel Hoffmeister was one of the first to write a complete biography of Antonín Dvořák. It is, in many respects, a sympathetic work: Hoffmeister was an advocate for Dvořák and his music, lobbying in 1928 for greater presence of his works in the concert hall. But the way in which Hoffmeister discusses Dvořák and his compositions betrays a lingering nineteenth-century German prejudice: Dvořák was a "Bohemian *Musikant*," not a *Komponist* of art music—great in his own sphere of "nostalgic" or national composition, but without rising to the abstract, absolute

⁵⁷ Haydn and Mozart represented the classical role of composer as craftsman. Schubert was an early romantic, and only the early period of his career conforms to this classical paradigm. Comparisons of Schubert with Haydn and Mozart usually serve to align them as melodists.

⁵⁸ Robert Hirschfeld, "Anton Dvořák," *Wiener Abendpost*, 4 May 1904, pg. 2. Cited in Botstein, 14.

greatness of the German line.⁵⁹ Especially for Hoffmeister, these observations were not intended as pejorative; some comments were even laudatory. But they still served to ascribe to Dvořák a sort of conditional, contingent greatness. The first tendency in Hoffmeister's text is to describe Dvořák in the terms of the classical masters, implying compositional beauty, but also his absence from the "great line of historical evolution." Hoffmeister accepts this basic premise that "progress" is inextricably linked to Germanness, and Dvořák's nationality and biography seem to prohibit his being progressive.

Dvořák, Hoffmeister continues, has an "instinctive tendency towards the forms and workmanship of the past."⁶⁰ And while intuition and instinct are virtues in a composer, in Dvořák's case, Hoffmeister implies the dominance of intuition over compositional logic.⁶¹ The works of his German contemporaries are learned achievements of form and technique, while Dvořák's repertoire is often described just as "merry" or "full of invention." While some of Hoffmeister's characterizations of Dvořák are quite flattering, many suggest a sort of Arcadian (read "peasant") simplicity.⁶²

Though he is writing almost fifteen years after Zdeněk Nejedlý's "Dvořák Battles," Karel Hoffmeister is still concerned with defending the composer (even though some of his characterizations, however positive in intent, betray Austro-German prejudices). Avoiding the polemics, Hoffmeister evaluates Dvořák as a formal classicist in comparison to the "dramatic" repertoire of his countryman, Bedřich Smetana:

⁵⁹ Cited in Beveridge, 86.

⁶⁰ Hoffmeister, 114.

⁶¹ Hoffmeister, 118. "The guiding factor in his creative work was not intellectual power but the gift of intuition... Intuition and intuition alone, led him securely and defined clearly the kind of work he should undertake what should be its subject matter."

⁶² Hoffmeister, 115.

Smetana's melody and rhythm is restricted to his own personality and to the Czech character, whereas Dvořák with his wider outlook showed greater diversity in these respects. His music shows more Slavonic coloring, and an exclusively Czech style appears only from time to time, while here and there we discern his close affinity to his models, Beethoven and Schubert. Smetana works in a more restricted area but his outline is always firm and original. Dvořák covers a wider ground, but his lines of demarcation are less definite, and occasionally admit an outside influence. We have seen how at the end of his career, he enriched his style by the addition of elements discovered in American sources.⁶³

The notion of Dvořák furthering a broader "Slavonic" narrative rather than just a Czech one is important to our discussion of the composer's cosmopolitanism. In observing that Dvořák's compositional and aesthetic lines of demarcation are less definite, Hoffmeister strikes at the heart of the issue: in the context of his music, Dvořák's national and cultural borders are fluid, allowing for a free development of external influences. I suggest this notion of Dvořák's less definite lines of demarcation extended equally to his position within the musical and philosophical debates of the *fin de siècle* in America.

This is particularly apparent in Karl Hoffmeister's final comparison of Smetana, "our dramatic composer," with "our epic and lyric poet, Dvořák."⁶⁴ Even to the sympathetic Hoffmeister, this comparison was that of a "progressive liberal musician [the dramatic and programmatic Smetana] opposed to a conservative one [Dvořák]."⁶⁵ Hoffmeister suggests a further antipode, that of the profound composer and the naïve one. These differences were textual and musical, but could be projected onto a larger personal plane. For instance,

if the spirit of Smetana, with its greater width and profundity, could not accept the Czech fairy-lore, popular at that period, as a serious foundation for opera, it appealed by its familiar simplicity to the more childlike mind of Dvořák.⁶⁶

⁶³ Hoffmeister, 117. Nejedlý had always faced difficulties asserting the progressive superiority of Smetana's repertoire for simple reasons of chronology: Smetana had already died by the time Dvořák's career became truly international.

⁶⁴ Hoffmeister, 120.

⁶⁵ Hoffmeister, 116.

⁶⁶ Hoffmeister, 119.

Hoffmeister's writings do not reflect animosity towards Dvořák. Hoffmeister admired Dvořák and was keen that the Czech people should cherish both him *and* Smetana. He spoke enthusiastically about the breadth and quality of Dvořák's music. But Dvořák was still an outlier,

a quiet, cautious, conservative peasant—inclined rather to the old Czechs, among whom he found his patrons... [and hindered by a] lack of general culture...⁶⁷

The same prejudices and presuppositions plagued Dvořák during his lifetime. The letters of Antonín Dvořák to his German peers, Eduard Hanslick, the critic, Johannes Brahms, the composer, and Friedrich (Fritz) August Simrock, the publisher, reflect a fundamental inequality of political and cultural status between them. The terms of address and turns of phrase used by Dvořák differ sharply from those of his Austro-German counterparts. Even in the close friendship between Dvořák and Brahms we see distinct patterns of German ethno-centrism. The correspondence between Dvořák and these three men (and their own correspondence about their Czech peer) demonstrate three discontinuities: 1) their varying modes of address 2) their Bohemian, Austrian and German heritages, and 3) their Catholic and Protestant faiths.⁶⁸

In his article, "Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, an Interpretation," David Beveridge charts the relationship of the two composers through their correspondence and mutual exchange with Hanslick and Simrock.⁶⁹ Beveridge undertakes a textual criticism of many of these letters, focusing on the initial socio-political imbalance between Dvořák and Brahms, as well as the gradual development of equality in their relationship.

⁶⁷ Hoffmeister, 116.

⁶⁸ Dvořák was a devout, practicing Catholic. Brahms was culturally a Lutheran.

⁶⁹ David Beveridge, "Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, an Interpretation," in *Dvořák and His World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

However, some of Beveridge's interpretations are overwrought. His identification of certain greetings and titles as obsequious, and his focus on phrases of "extreme servility" such as Your Nobleness [*Euer Wohlgeboren*] are perhaps exaggerated interpretations of Dvořák's words.⁷⁰ Indeed, in reading many nineteenth-century letters, and certainly those among Dvořák, Brahms, Hanslick, and Simrock, we see a tendency to formulized and deferential modes of address.⁷¹

However, it is still evident that Dvořák felt compelled to even greater levels of deference and respect than did his German colleagues. For instance, in an early letter of April 1878, Dvořák addressed Brahms as both "Your Nobleness" and "highly revered master," expounding on the composer's kindness.

With feelings of the most joyful excitement I read the last letter, esteemed by me, from Your Nobleness, and the words so warmly felt that you spoke to me and the joy that you found in my works have moved me most deeply and make me quite extraordinarily happy. I can't find enough words to tell you, highly revered Master, everything that is happening now in my heart. I can only as much as say to you that you have already made me beholden to you in the greatest thanks for my whole life, in that you have toward me the best and most noble intentions, which are worthy of a truly great artist and man, and have the kindness to further my artistic aspirations.⁷²

Brahms was eight years Dvořák's senior and in 1878, the two men were in vastly different places in their careers. Brahms was a composer of international note and Dvořák was publishing his first works outside of Prague. Still, the florid nature of Dvořák's

⁷⁰ Beveridge, 61. Your Nobleness [*Euer Wohlgeboren*], for instance, was a term used to describe members of the lowest level of the nobility, and some among the haute bourgeoisie. It is interesting though that in Otakar Šourek's *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, this phrase, and other terms of address appear differently or are removed entirely. In a period of lingering criticism of Dvořák from some Czech musicologists (many of who were active in the Communist party), Šourek may have excised those passages in which Dvořák appeared to play into social and national imbalances.

⁷¹ Beveridge, 59, 61. We might observe the relative servility of Dvořák's language in light of the fact that Hanslick and Brahms, both very influential Germans, also begin letters with "very honored sir." At the time this was a fairly common mode of address.

⁷² Antonín Dvořák to Johannes Brahms, 1 April 1878. Beveridge, 67.

writing exceeds that of common courtesy, reflecting, in addition to a difference in age and recognition, a national-political imbalance between him and Brahms.

Over the course of their friendship, during which Dvořák matured as a composer and gained an international audience, he appears to have also gained confidence in his Bohemian identity. In his first letters to Brahms, Dvořák Germanizes his name, signing as Anton, without the addition of any accents in his surname. Gradually, the Czech composer applies the acute accent and *háček* in Dvořák, and late in his friendship with Brahms, he signs as Antonín. Dvořák's subtle suppression of his Czech heritage exhibits an initial national imbalance the composer gradually overcame.

The narration of Dvořák and Brahms's relationship is compelling in its own right, but it also returns to our larger point: artistically and aesthetically, Dvořák inhabited a middle ground between many of the contemporary intellectual divides.

The Austro-German stereotype of Czech simplicity was readily applied to Dvořák, even by those who admired him most. To a Northern German, protestant elite, Dvořák's Catholicism was problematic. Brahms even went so far as to call Dvořák a "fanatical Catholic," and to observe that, "A man so industrious as Dvořák by no means has time to get stuck on doubts; rather all his life he stands by what he was taught in his childhood."⁷³ The admiration of Dvořák's industriousness was similarly couched, even as Brahms defended his friend to other Germans:

Dvořák is endlessly industrious, which is why he knows only a little literature. He knows quite little even of the literature of music. Of other education, likewise, he has only a little, but talent and eminent ability!⁷⁴

⁷³ Beveridge, 75.

⁷⁴ Beveridge, 76. Johannes Brahms to Heuberger, 16 February 1896.

These are weak assertions at best. By the time of this last comment in 1896, not only had Dvořák been a tenured faculty member at the premier music institution in Bohemia, but also he had been awarded an Honorary Doctorate at the University of Cambridge. He had directed Thurber's National Conservatory for three years and exerted considerable influence on his American pupils. Critiques of his literary education are also dubious. As a young man, Dvořák had been one of the first to read a Czech translation of Longfellow's *Hiawatha* in manuscript, before it was generally published. In America, he read the papers daily, and while he may not have amassed a library of scores like many of his contemporaries, he did request that Simrock's major publications be sent to him. He was familiar with the writings of Wagner and Nietzsche and discussed them in letters to pupils and friends. And finally, Dvořák read, wrote and spoke in three languages. Brahms knew one. Surely, Dvořák did not enjoy the cultured, literary upbringing of his bourgeois contemporaries and predecessors. But it is clear from the writings of his peers and students that he was considerably—if not formally—educated and trained.

Yet, the characterization of Dvořák as the “Bohemian *Musikant*,” implying “rustic natural talent while avoiding any suggestions of greatness,” persisted even among his friends. Brahms chooses to describe Dvořák's repertoire as “merry,” “charming,” “fresh,” and filled with “invention” (*Erfindung*), words with which he rarely described his own music, or that of Austro-German contemporaries.⁷⁵ The juxtaposition of Dvořák's invention with the learnedness of German works is a common theme. Brahms's enjoyment of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony is still related with the observation that thematic development in the first movement produces improper results—the kind of comment that one would offer to a young composition student:

⁷⁵ Beveridge, 81.

Too much that's fragmentary, incidental, loiters about in the piece. Everything fine, musically captivating and beautiful—but no main points! Especially in the first movement, the result is not proper.⁷⁶

Fundamental to the essentialist discussion of Dvořák's *oeuvre* and the man himself was a German disconcertion with Czech nationalism. In remarking that "Dvořák seems to me a typical Czech," Brahms suggests a kind of simplicity, conservativeness, and political bluntness.⁷⁷ Brahms was particularly critical of what he perceived as Dvořák's nationalist works. Brahms remarked of the *Te Deum* that it must have been composed for the "Celebration of the Destruction of Vienna and Berlin by the Czechs."⁷⁸ In his estimation, the *Hussite Overture* was little more than "bragging, insolent, and bad," and in 1886 he dismissed the cantata, *St. Ludmila* with "let's have nothing of these English occasional pieces!"⁷⁹ Among the Viennese establishment, these direct assertions of Czech cultural autonomy were problematic. They reflected the growing threat of broader political autonomy and undermined an Austro-German cultural hegemony. Ironically, Simrock found that these same folk-like (*volkstümlich*) and even "*national-poetisch*" qualities made Dvořák's work highly marketable.⁸⁰

In considering the scholarly discussion of Dvořák in the decades after his death, as well as correspondence between the composer and his German peers and friends, we observe a consistent German ethnocentrism. Dvořák's compositional Czechness, while prized for its originality, invention and—in Simrock's case—marketability, still fell short of the learned musical achievements of Brahms or the perceived progressivism of Wagner. But this contemporary estimation of Dvořák and his music freed the Bohemian

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Beveridge, 85.

⁷⁸ Beveridge, 83.

⁷⁹ Beveridge, 84.

⁸⁰ Beveridge, 86.

composer in a unique way. As a disenfranchised Czech in Austria-Hungary, Dvořák was free from the restrictions and expectations of continuing a Beethovenian legacy.

Viewed through the pragmatist's lens, Dvořák was spurred to action, experimenting with a variety of forms and compositional languages without being tied to a particular philosophical creed, a fact apparent in his body of work, his pedagogy, and his national character as expressed in Boston, the American Midwest and New York City. Dvořák embraced the majority of contemporary genres and styles of composition, from programmatic and dramatic to strictly instrumental works without extra-musical reference ("absolute" music in Wagner's terminology). Though he is often cited as using a more conservative, "established [compositional] syntax," his correspondence reflects an interest in, and even advocacy for Wagner, spurred by readings of Nietzsche's *The Death of Tragedy* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*. Dvořák's literary interests represented the nexus of the *lyric* and the *dramatic* and this had profound influences on his national composition, particularly in the United States, with the compositional evocation of *Hiawatha*. Dvořák was influenced by notions of the exotic both at home and abroad, turning to romanticized notions of pre-Austro-Hungarian Bohemia and Moravia, as well as pre-colonization Great Plains, for inspiration. Finally, during Dvořák's American tenure, we see Dvořák's pragmatic tendency to stress Bohemian nationalism, cosmopolitanism, or American nationalism, depending on his location and practical need.

Dvořák as a Compositional Pragmatist

The division of Romantic composers into aesthetic camps, most especially under the banners of Absolutists and Programmaticists, does not hold up to scrutiny.⁸¹ Critics

⁸¹ This is a point which Carl Dahlhaus treats at length in *The Idea of Absolute Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

largely promulgated the division, and composers rarely applied these classifications to themselves. Though Brahms and Liszt were touted by others as representative of the two camps, neither conformed entirely in his output. Brahms did not refer to himself as a composer of “absolute music.” Liszt, a champion of symphonic poems and characteristic piano pieces also had forays into much more conservative idioms.⁸² Both of these men matured over the course of their careers, and responded, favorably and in reaction, to the structural and aesthetic trends of the day. This is the nature of composing. Musicians experiment in different styles and arrive at their own. But in Dvořák, we see an uncommon multiplicity of subject, style, and form: a variety that suggests active compositional pragmatism, beyond the maturation and development we might discern in other composers of the day.

Dvořák wrote in almost every classical form of his time, and an investigation of his repertoire reveals prolific work in a variety of aesthetic styles. In the absolute realm, there are nine symphonies (though two have programmatic titles), four full concerti, orchestral nocturnes and serenades, symphonic variations, and several orchestral dance suites. Dvořák also wrote three sonatas, five piano trios, one clarinet quintet, two piano quintets, three string quintets, two piano quartets, and fourteen string quartets.

In the realm of programmatic music, Dvořák composed six symphonic tone poems, nearly a dozen characteristic or programmatic works for piano, including *Ze Šumavy (From the Bohemian Forest)*, B. 133, *Dvě perličky (Two little pearls)*, B. 156, and the *Poetické nálady (Poetic tone pictures)*, B. 168. There are also eight concert or dramatic orchestral overtures with evocative titles but no explicit program.

⁸² As exhibited by his association with the Caecilian Movement.

Demonstrating a further diversity of medium (but outside of the absolute-programmatic debate) are nine sets of sacred choral works and secular part songs, as well as more than thirty collections of solo songs and vocal duets and ten operas.⁸³ The tremendous variety of Dvořák's composition, from numbered symphonies in sonata-allegro form to symphonic poems like *Vodník (The Water Goblin)*, B. 195, suggests pragmatic, stylistic flexibility.

As a point of comparison, Franz Liszt wrote well over a hundred piano compositions with programmatic or evocative titles, and more than forty tone poems and other orchestral programmatic works. But in the absolute realm, he wrote only two numbered piano concerti (Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-Flat Major, H. 4, and Piano Concerto No. 2 in A Major, H. 6), a Piano Trio (D. 2) and a Duo Sonata (D. 3). He composed no quartets, quintets, sextets or numbered symphonies. Liszt's letters suggest three early piano sonatas, a rondo, and two other piano concerti, but these works are lost.

Richard Wagner's instrumental repertoire is similarly weighted to the programmatic side. Of twenty-five orchestral works, there are only two symphonies, and the second, a Symphony in E Major, WWV. 35, exists only as a sketch of the first movement and twenty-nine bars of the Adagio. We know definitively that Wagner wrote one String Quartet in D Major, but this work is lost. Of sixteen piano works, only four are conventional sonatas, and only one of these survives.

On the other side of the divide is Johannes Brahms. Of thirteen orchestral works, only the *Akademische Festouverture (Academic Festival Overture)*, Op. 80, the *Tragische Ouverture (Tragic Overture)*, Op. 81 and the *Three Hungarian Dances*, Woo. 1, could be said to suggest extra-musical associations. Of twenty-five chamber works,

⁸³ Fourteen operas if one considers the large scale revisions of earlier works.

only one, a humorous *Hymne* for the violinist, Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), bears anything other than a key and an opus number. Many of Brahms's piano works reference dance forms, but only one set, the *Souvenir de la Russie*, Anh. IV/6, published under the pseudonym G. W. Marks, has a truly programmatic title.

None of these three men produced bodies of work that were entirely aligned with a single aesthetic philosophy. But none experimented as widely in a variety of styles and genres of composition as did Dvořák.

Dvořák's Compositional Pragmatism in an American Context

Dvořák used his three-year sojourn in the United States to travel widely, visiting Boston, Spillville (Iowa), Chicago, Omaha, St. Paul, and Worcester (Massachusetts). The nature of Dvořák's compositional activities corresponded in many ways to his physical orientation in the country. The works Dvořák composed during the American years are diverse. There are some pieces in which Dvořák's interest in national music are readily apparent, including the String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, "American," B. 179, the String Quintet in E Major, "American," B. 180, the Suite in A Major, B. 184, the cantata, *The American Flag*, B. 177 as well as an arrangement of Stephen Foster's *Old Folks at Home*, B. 605.

But there are other works that, while conceived in the United States, are not directly related to any national American idioms, and certainly not the music of Native Americans or African Americans. The most obvious example is his monumental Cello Concerto in B Minor, B. 191, which was apparently inspired (or at least encouraged) by a New York performance of Victor Herbert's cello concerto. Though it was composed in the United States, it does not exhibit the rhythmic or modal characteristics of the

Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, “From the New World.” The Othello Concert Overture, B. 174 (begun at home), and Two Pieces for piano, B. 188 were also completed during these years, but neither are characterized by Dvořák’s American idiom. Dvořák also undertook a substantial revision of the opera *Dimitrij*, B. 186 (Revised version of B. 127; given its first performance at Prague on 7 November 1894), and wrote ten *Biblické písně* (*Biblical songs*), B. 185, derived from the Protestant Czech Bible of Kralice.

The relationship between Dvořák and American national idioms also reflects a pragmatic approach to personal national identity. Dvořák was indeed recruited to the Conservatory because of his reputation as a nationalist composer. Dvořák’s Bohemian identity was indeed very strong, but its expression changed throughout his travels. It is worth discussing Dvořák’s experience and reception in three places: New York, Boston, and the American Mid-West, particularly Chicago, and Spillville, Iowa.

The malleability of Dvořák’s national musical expression while in the United States is an important indicator of the composer’s personal pragmatism. Varyingly, Dvořák represented the European cosmopolitan composer, the Bohemian nationalist, as well as a unique immigrant identity in pursuit of an adopted American nationalism.

In Chicago, where Dvořák conducted the World’s Columbian Exhibition Festival Orchestra on Bohemia Day, the composer’s entire purpose was to represent his Czech heritage, and to perform Czech national works for his transplanted countrymen. Dvořák’s summer in Spillville, Iowa was illustrative of a uniquely American immigrant experience. He was surrounded by Bohemian-American immigrants, spoke Czech, played daily services at the Czech Catholic Church, and passed his evenings with Bohemian card

games. But it was also in Spillville that Dvořák penned the two chamber works he would subtitle “American.”

In Boston, where critics and patrons were steeped in an Austro-German musical heritage, Dvořák’s plan for American music was viewed with suspicion. Unconvinced by a compositional school rooted in African- and Native-American musical material, Higginson’s Symphony Orchestra focused on a more cosmopolitan portrait of Dvořák. William F. Apthorp’s program notes from the 1891-1892 through the 1894-1895 seasons focus on Dvořák’s own Czech nationalism, his friendship with Brahms, and programmatic similarities to Liszt. They also offer a more nuanced, contingent estimation of Dvořák’s focus on African American music.

It was in New York, at the National Conservatory of Music—surrounded by black students and encouraged by the nationalist enthusiasm of Thurber—that Dvořák embraced a peculiarly American musical identity. The majority of Dvořák’s large American compositions were written specifically for New York celebrations and ensembles. In New York, Dvořák centered his composition instruction on the observation and liberation of sounds from the composer’s own environment. What is more, a few New York commentators discussed Dvořák in terms of a uniquely American mold of masculinity.

Dvořák in Chicago

On 12 August 1893, Antonín Dvořák led Theodore Thomas’s Festival Orchestra in the “Bohemian Day Concert” at the World’s Columbian Exhibition. That day, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* published an article titled “Dvořák Has Arrived,” focusing on the composer’s Bohemian identity. The unidentified author observed,

Dvořák loves to be among his own people and is the guest of Chicago Bohemians. He comes here from Spielville [*sic*], Ia., a small Bohemian settlement... By native genius and unquenchable audacity Dvořák has forged to the front and now occupies a prominent position among the few great living composers. He has a flavor of his own—made up of his nationality in part and for the rest of his own pronounced individuality. His genius is of the heroic order—bold and venturesome.⁸⁴

The author's words exhibit several of the themes already introduced. First, are the strong assertions of Dvořák's nationalism, and the identifications of unique "native genius." Second, is a lexicon of American masculinity that we find linked regularly to discourses of pragmatism. Dvořák's "unquenchable audacity," "pronounced individuality," and "bold and venturesome" genius stand in stark contrast to *fin de siècle* conceptions of the aesthete. We find the same vocabulary in an 1892 *New York Herald* article that lauds the "power of [Dvořák's] musical genius" [emphasis added].⁸⁵ The *Chicago Daily Tribune*, like many papers in Boston in New York, was preoccupied with a conception of Dvořák as an unpretentious creative force, the same notion evident in William James's characterization of John Knowles Paine as "the best and simplest of men."⁸⁶

While he was on the East Coast, conceptions of Dvořák were varyingly Bohemian, cosmopolitan, and even American. During his brief weekend in Chicago, Dvořák served as a representative of Czech culture. Shortly thereafter, Dvořák wrote to a friend in Prague,

We have just come back from Chicago where, as you probably know, the 12th August was "Czech Day" at the Exhibition and I hasten to write and tell you something about this great day.

On this day there was a great procession of all American Czechs at the Exhibition where a big concert was held and a big *Sokol* display. There were about 30,000 Czechs in the procession and the concert was in the big Festival Hall

⁸⁴ Anon., "Dvořák has Arrived," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 August 1893, 4.

⁸⁵ Anon., "Antonín Dvořák Leads at Music Hall," *New York Herald*, 22 October 1892, pg. 6.

⁸⁶ William James, *The Letters of William James*, Vol. 4 (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), 534. Letter to Catherine Elizabeth Havens, Boston 22 February 1876.

(orchestra 114 performers) and I conducted my own compositions and Mr. Hlaváč from Russia conducted the other works by Czech composers. The orchestra, as also the rendering, was splendid and the enthusiasm general. All the papers wrote enthusiastically as you will probably learn from your papers. The exhibition itself is gigantic and to write of it would be a vain undertaking. It must be seen and seen very often, and still you do not really know anything, there is so much and everything so big truly “made in America.”⁸⁷

At the concert in question, Dvořák conducted his Symphony No. 8 in G Major, three *Slovanské tance* (*Slavonic Dances*) from Op. 72, in B Major, E Minor and F Major, as well as *Domov můj* (*My Homeland*), B. 125a.⁸⁸ All of these pieces have strong, but complicated Czech national ties. The Symphony in G Major is dedicated “To the Bohemian Academy of Emperor Franz Joseph for the Encouragement of Arts and Literature, in thanks for my election.” The *Domov můj* overture is one of Dvořák’s pieces of incidental music for the play *Josef Kajetán Tyl* by František Ferdinand Šamberk. Tyl, a Bohemian dramatist, wrote the poem *Kde domov můj?* (“Where is my Homeland?”).

The theme of a captive or undefined homeland was key to the Bohemia Day festivities and parade. Again, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* focused on the tremendous outpouring of Czech national sentiment, juxtaposing this feeling with the nonexistence of an autonomous Bohemian state. “The red and white colors under which” the American Bohemians and “their brave forefathers have been fighting for liberty more than 200 years were prominently in evidence everywhere.”⁸⁹ The dual identities of American Czechs, as well as the pain of political disenfranchisement were expressed directly before Dvořák’s performance by the Wisconsin Lieutenant-Governor, Charles Jonas (born Karel Jonáš, 1840-1896). The *Tribune* reported,

⁸⁷ Šourek, 164.

⁸⁸ Anon., “Bohemia at the Fair” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 13 August 1893, 2. and Šourek, 164. Both of these works cite *Domov můj* (*My Homeland*) as the “My Home” overture. Because of the later change in numbering of Dvořák’s symphonies, Symphony No. 8 in G Major is cited as Symphony No. 4 in contemporary accounts.

⁸⁹ Anon., “Bohemia at the Fair” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 13 August 1893, 2.

Lieut-Gov. Jonas, orator of the day, spoke first in English and then in his native tongue, reviewing briefly the progress of Bohemia in the development of industries of all kinds, and of art and of literature, eulogized the Bohemians of America for their love of a free country and their loyalty to the Stars and Stripes... The speaker was sorry that the Banner of Bohemia was nowhere to be seen in the buildings of the White City, but he was proud that the products of Bohemian skill and invention occupied the most conspicuous position in the Austrian section.⁹⁰

The importance of these remarks as a prelude to Dvořák's performance cannot be overestimated. The concert of Czech music was the main event, presented in front of 8,000 people in Festival Hall by a 114-piece orchestra. The *Daily Tribune* reported "as Dvořák walked out upon the stage a storm of applause greeted him. For nearly two minutes the old composer stood beside the music rack, baton in hand, bowing his acknowledgments. The players dropped their instruments to join the welcome."⁹¹ The thunderous applause of 8,000 concertgoers placed Dvořák at the center of the Bohemia Day celebrations. Throughout all these events and orations, with their focus on a lineage of "brave forefathers," was the undercurrent of Czech political disenfranchisement in Austria-Hungary. The same reality ran through Dvořák's European career, making his enthusiasm for the role of musical spokesman all the more meaningful.

Dvořák in Spillville, Iowa

In the small town of Spillville Iowa, Dvořák encountered the unique narratives of Bohemian-American immigrant life. Like many of the transplanted Czechs who made Spillville their home, Dvořák straddled a line between a European and American identity, steeped both in the culture of his distant homeland, as well as peculiarities of the American Midwest. The biographical details of this summer are telling: Dvořák spent his

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid. Many contemporary accounts discuss Dvořák's physical appearance, especially his beard and often stern expressions. Dvořák may have appeared old, but he was only 52.

evenings among the elder men of the town, drinking, playing cards and conversing in Czech. Every morning, he walked to the Czech Catholic Church and played the morning service on the organ.⁹² Dvořák readily expressed his excitement about spending the summer of 1893 among “his own folks,” reporting to his friend Dr. Emil Kozánek in Kroměříž, Moravia,

Then we shall go straight to Chicago, have a look at the Exhibition and then set out for *our summer Vysoká* in the State of Iowa, for the Czech village of Spillville where the teacher and the parish priest and everything is Czech and so I shall be among my own folks and am looking forward to it very much.

The teacher, Mr. Kovařík (from Písek and here 26 years), and the priest, Mr. Bílý, a very lively fellow, so they say (from Budějovice in Bohemia), will be the people with whom I shall be in closest contact. I shall have *pigeons* there and maybe we shall even play “*darda*”? How grand it will be. The priest has two pairs of ponies and we shall ride to Protivín, a little town near Spillville. Here in America there are *names of towns and villages of all nations under the sun!*⁹³

To refer to Spillville, a place that the composer had not yet visited, as his summer Vysoká, is significant. The Bohemian village of Vysoká was Dvořák’s summer sanctuary—a place for which he yearned deeply during his American sojourn, and even during winter seasons in Prague. The reference of Kovařík’s home in Písek and Fr. Bílý’s home of Budějovice also demonstrates a certain need for Bohemian connection and continuity. However, during this time Dvořák met a performing troupe of what has been variously identified as Kickapoo or Yankton Sioux.⁹⁴ He inhabited a geography vastly different from what he experienced in Europe. Most significantly, he wrote two significant chamber works which, rather than employing Bohemian melodic or rhythmic tropes, are subtitled “American.” Ultimately, Dvořák’s Spillville summer presented the

⁹² J. J. Kovařík *Reminiscences* in Dvořák, Antonín, and Otakar Šourek, *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsourm (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 161.

⁹³ Šourek, 158

⁹⁴ Tibbetts, 91.

composer with some of the archetypical tensions (or cognitive dissonances) of an American immigrant identity.

Dvořák in Boston

Dvořák was a somewhat controversial figure in Boston during his American tenure, but his works were fairly regularly performed. An examination of concert programs from the complete subscription series of the Boston Symphony from the 1891-1892 season through the 1894-1895 season allows one to draw a number of interesting inferences.⁹⁵

Over the course of these four concert seasons, biographies of Dvořák were regularly included in program notes for performances of his works. For some successive concerts, the author, William F. Apthorp, would largely copy earlier texts with slight edits. However, over the period of Dvořák's American tenure, the Boston symphony cycled through four separate versions of the Bohemian composer's biography. One common theme in these notes is the influence of Dvořák's childhood poverty, and the narrative of largely self-driven education and development. For instance, Apthorp depicts a somewhat exaggerated peasant upbringing. In the program notes for a 29 October 1892 performance of the Suite for Orchestra in D Major, Op. 39, Apthorp colorfully asserted that Dvořák's

taste for music was aroused by listening to the itinerant bands of musicians that would visit the village on feast and holidays, and prevailed upon the village schoolmaster to give him lessons on the violin and in singing.⁹⁶

These itinerant bands are the literal expressions of the Bohemian *Musikanten* Hoffmeister would evoke decades later. This perceived parochialism of rural Bohemia

⁹⁵ See Appendix D: Boston Symphony Orchestra Dvořák Performance History 1892-1895.

⁹⁶ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Twelfth Season 1892-93: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1892), 79.

was regularly mentioned in both German and American versions of Dvořák's biography. There is, however, a marked difference of tone and intent. As previously discussed, German descriptions of Dvořák's childhood serve to distance the Bohemian composer from the dominant Austro-German composers. Brahms's childhood was marked by poverty, but it was still an urban upbringing in a German city. Nelahozeves and Zlonice were—at their worst—provincial backwaters in which Dvořák's musical gifts stagnated. As a result German biographies often understood Dvořák as culturally and geographically predisposed to a kind of limited artistic capability.

In American narrations, Dvořák's childhood poverty took an entirely different tone. Rather than an unmitigated hindrance, Dvořák's upbringing reflected an archetypically American narrative: the forging of genius through hard work in spite of childhood adversity. Apthorp continued in the 29 October 1892 program by explaining:

Dvořák is notable as a composer for the strong national Czech accent of his music, his rhythmic originality, his brilliancy of style, and a certain depth and genuineness of feeling that are quite his own. No doubt he suffered somewhat from the very restricted circle of his activity before the year 1878, before which time few of his works were performed; and he consequently had the advantage of but little intelligent criticism. He thus reached the age of thirty-seven, with his individual style pretty thoroughly formed, but with little but his own self-criticism to help him in judging of his own merits and shortcomings. The originality, nervous force, and depth of feeling in his music are, none the less unquestionable.⁹⁷

Brilliancy and originality are words that a German contemporary might readily use to describe the Bohemian composer. But “depth” seems a uniquely American addition to Dvořák's criticism.⁹⁸ Apthorp's focus on Dvořák's originality returns us to a discussion of Dvořák's musical pragmatism. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schumann dominated

⁹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 83.

⁹⁸ Though further research could be pursued here: As discussed, Simrock and Hoffmeister do not discuss Dvořák in terms of depth, but they are not critics. An investigation of Austrian and German music criticism could prove fruitful.

the Boston Symphony's programs of these four years.⁹⁹ The programmatic school, including Liszt, Wagner, and the American composer, Edward MacDowell accounted for another large segment of performances. Works by Brahms were also regularly performed. But taken as a whole, the Austro-German (and German-educated) contingent dominated BSO performance under the batons of both Arthur Nikisch and Emil Paur, just as it did most western orchestras. With thirteen programs (twenty-five separate performances in total) of his works between 1891 and spring of 1895, Dvořák's works were given a generous number of performances by the Boston Symphony.¹⁰⁰ What is most interesting is that Dvořák was neither characterized as a purely nationalist composer, nor a *de-facto* pupil of Johannes Brahms. Apthorp's notes from October 1893 read,

It is idle to speculate upon what judgment the future will pass on a still living composer; but it seems as if his fame were destined to rest mainly on cantatas, oratorios and Requiem. His style is thoroughly individual, albeit a certain Czech national accent is unmistakable in most of his music; if he reflects the influence of one composer than of another, it is that of Brahms; yet the similarity between the two men is but superficial at best. Dvořák's own nature is too strong and individual to allow of his being anything but himself.¹⁰¹

However, many Bostonians did criticize Dvořák for his adoption of African- and Native-American musical characteristics as a basis for American national music. In spite of Boston's abolitionist fervor during the Civil War, a very particular type of nineteenth-century racialism was current among many of the Brahmins.¹⁰² Henry Lee Higginson and

⁹⁹ Tracing the German lineage to its root, Apthorp regularly mentions Bach in program notes relating to these men. Occasionally, works by Bach himself are performed: Between 1892 and 1895, the BSO performed *Three Movements from Violin-sonatas*, transcribed for string orchestra by Sigismund Bachrich (1841-1913), a Suite in D Major, and a Passacaglia for Organ, in C Minor, arranged for orchestra by Heinrich Esser (1818-1872).

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix D: Boston Symphony Orchestra Dvořák Performance History 1892-1895.

¹⁰¹ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893), 39. Friday, 20 and Saturday, 21 October 1893. The Symphony's typography changes over the course of Dvořák's tenure. In 1891, he is generally referred to without accents, in 1892 he is recorded as Dvorák and in 1893 on as Dvořák.

¹⁰² Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1869, repr. 1900). Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who was in command of a black regiment

his wife, Ida Agassiz Higginson, along with two wartime comrades, actually worked together to administer the recently emancipated “Cottonham” plantation in Georgia. Both Higginson and his wife found the practical interactions with freedmen difficult and problematic.¹⁰³ Their documents and letters betray a deep paternalism and essentialist notions about the intellectual and moral capabilities of blacks. Higginson himself had married the daughter of Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), a professor at Harvard who believed blacks and whites were descended from separate species.

Unsurprisingly, Dvořák’s suggestion that the future of an American national music lay in African American and Native American music created considerable controversy.¹⁰⁴ In late December 1893, just two weeks after its world premier in New York, the Symphony No. 9 in E minor, “From the New World,” was given its Boston premier.¹⁰⁵ The program notes from that performance are worth reproducing in full:

When Dr. Dvořák announced last spring that he thought the Negro melodies might prove a good *Volkslied* foundation for the development of a characteristically “national” school of music in America, the true gist of his remark was very widely misunderstood. Many, if not most, people took him to mean by “Negro melodies” the popular songs of our older “Negro Mistrelsy,” such things, for instance, as “Old Folks at Home,” “Old Uncle Ned,” and other similar tunes by the late Stephen Collins Foster. Certainly, it might be said that Foster’s songs, although written not over half a century ago, have grown to be more genuinely American folk-songs than any other melodies we have in this country; but that they could be taken as germs of anything worthy to be called symphonic developments would hardly have entered the head of any musician.

in the Union Army, demonstrates the capacity of Boston abolitionists to harbor deeply racist notions: “Another childlike attribute in these men [African-American soldiers], which is less agreeable, is a sort of blunt insensibility to giving physical pain... Yet I should not fear any wanton outrage from them. After all their wrongs, they are not really revengeful; and I would far rather enter a captured city with them than with white troops, for they would be more subordinate. But for mere physical suffering they would have no fine sympathies. The cruel things they have seen and undergone have helped to blunt them; and if I ordered them to put to death a dozen prisoners, I think they would do it without remonstrance.”

¹⁰³ Horowitz, *Moral Fire*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix E: For National Music.

¹⁰⁵ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893), 327. Friday 29 and Saturday 30 December 1893.

They were first brought to public notice by Negro minstrel troupes (of the burnt-cork type), and have thus become surrounded with Negro associations in the minds of most of us. But they are really quite innocent of any of the special characteristics of Negro music, even of such music as was currently sung by the Negro slaves on Southern plantations in the old *ante-bellum* days...

What Dr. Dvořák meant by “Negro melodies,” as a *Volkslied* foundation for a national school of American composition, was the music sung by the real Negroes themselves (not their burnt-cork parodists) on the Southern plantations, — a different matter altogether. The origin of most of these melodies is as yet to a great extent problematical; it is highly probable that they are for the most part of very mixed origin. Native African elements are undoubtedly to be found in them; but the form in which they have been handed down by oral tradition in the South has probably been considerably modified by French, Hispano-Indian, and Methodist camp-meeting influences; all that we know definitely is that, as folk-songs, they are the popular music of the Southern American Negro, and that they have a sharply marked character of their own. Much of the thematic material in this last symphony of Dr. Dvořák’s is borrowed from genuine Negro music; in this work he has taken a step toward realizing a characteristic school of American music from his point of view.

The symphony is in the four regular symphonic movements, each of which is developed in tolerable adherence to symphonic traditions. It is scored for the ordinary modern full orchestra.¹⁰⁶

This excerpt suggests two further points. The first is a Bostonian ambivalence towards Dvořák’s “American” compositions. Apthorp closes his evaluation of the Symphony in E Minor—a work that was interrupted by outbursts of applause in its New York premier—as “developed in *tolerable* adherence to symphonic traditions” [emphasis added]. While Dvořák has taken a step toward the realization of a characteristic school of American music only “from his point of view,” Apthorp suggests a genuineness and activeness that would resonate with Higginson and James.

Dvořák in New York

Finally, we return to Dvořák’s position in New York, a city in which, as Director of the National Conservatory of Music of America, Dvořák pursued an American

¹⁰⁶ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893), 329-332. See Appendix F: Boston Symphony Orchestra Program Notes on the Symphony No. 9 in E minor, “From the New World.”

compositional identity. In large part this has already been addressed in discussions of the practical realities associated with Thurber's offer and Dvořák's acceptance of the New York position. *New York Times* and *Herald* excerpts have already demonstrated the tremendous enthusiasm with which the city received the composer. For instance, Anton Seidl was quoted in the *Herald* proclaiming "Dr. Dvořák is a great accession to the musical art of this land. We have reason to rejoice in his coming as the earnest of fresh conquests for us all."¹⁰⁷

Indeed, Dvořák's own writings from New York, especially in the *Tribune* and *Herald*, reflect a desire to develop and utilize a peculiarly American compositional language, focused largely on African-American folk songs. In New York, Dvořák premiered his *Columbian Te Deum*, his cantata, *The American Flag*, his Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, "From the New World," and his orchestration of Stephen Collins Foster's "Old Folks at Home."

Dvořák was heralded for his championing of American composition and themes, though not all his reviews were glowing.¹⁰⁸ But on the whole, contemporary accounts reflect a genuineness of Dvořák's American investment. Regarding Dvořák's inaugural American concert in October 1892, the *Times* observed,

Dr. Dvořák speaks with much enthusiasm of the delight he has taken in writing another composition especially for America. This work is a cantata for solo

¹⁰⁷ Anon., "Antonín Dvořák Leads at Music Hall," *New York Herald*, 22 October 1892, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Anon., "Amusements, Dr. Dvořák Introduced," *New York Times*, 22 October 1892. "The concert given at Music Hall last night by the National Conservatory of Music to introduce Antonín Dvořák was, to say the least, peculiar. It began in impudence and ended in art... There was no satisfactory reason why an oration should be delivered. The arrival of Dr. Dvořák to direct the business of teaching music at the National Conservatory is unquestionably a beneficial thing for art; but it is not necessarily a subject that a large audience cares to here [*sic*] discussed in a twenty-minute speech. Speechmaking is altogether too common an offense. And when it is so tenuous in thought, so platitudinous in style, and so lachrymose in delivery as the oration of the eminent Bostonian who spoke last night, it is altogether a weariness to the flesh... [The best part of the evening was under Seidl's baton] For Dr. Dvořák is an extremely bad conductor. His beat is so uncertain that it is impossible to see how any body of players or singers could follow it with confidence.

singers, chorus, and orchestra, and is a setting of Joseph Rodman Drake's well-known poem, "The American Flag"... Dr. Dvořák says that he regards the poem as remarkably well suited to musical treatment, and that it gave him what he felt to be genuine inspiration.¹⁰⁹

There is one last theme that we must note: the focus, particularly among the New York authors, on Dvořák's embodiment (both personally and compositionally) of a distinctly American masculinity. After Dvořák's debut concert, the *Times* observed:

The triple overture, "Nature, Life and Love," is rather in the nature of three descriptive symphonic movements than in that of an overture. The first two movements display the composer in his engaging mood of geniality. It is the geniality of vigorous manhood, and has the force of masculine will behind it. The first movement is especially bright and virile in melody and instrumental treatment, while the second, a Bohemian carnival, is beautified by a serenely lovely middle episode of rare tenderness.¹¹⁰

If Jamesian pragmatism is chiefly concerned with the products of action, the "vigorous manhood" of Dvořák's scores reflects, compositionally, the very same impetus.

Dvořák the Pedagogue

Finally, we turn to Dvořák's pedagogical pragmatism. Accounts from three of his Czech students reiterate some of the important themes already discussed. Josef Suk (1874-1935), one of Dvořák's composition students, and later his son-in-law, directly addressed the composer's interest in a variety of aesthetic materials and his encouragement of independent expression.

In general, there was no [compositional] movement of which [Dvořák] did not take notice; he studied Bruckner, was interested in Richard Strauss and was pleased when he saw among his students a striving after new and independent expression. I brought to one of our first lessons a trio, a little composition from my boyhood days. On going through the second movement, which had a Dvořák coloring, he gave me a friendly look and remarked: "I have heard something like it; seek and seek again, young man, as we had to seek." He was interested in everything, nothing in our lives escaped his attention. He liked to read the papers

¹⁰⁹ Anon., "Amusements, Dr. Dvořák Introduced," *New York Times*, 22 October 1892.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

and critical notices, both home and foreign, and read regularly Czech provincial papers, for he took a lively concern in the cultural activities of the countryside.¹¹¹

Dvořák's admonition to "seek and seek again," recalls Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson's equation of composition with discovery, and the composer's constant striving after the new suggest a Jamesian philosophical preoccupation with action. Other recollections of Dvořák's instruction demonstrate his disinterest in promoting specific stylistic or aesthetic ideals. Vítězslav Novák (1870-1949) recalled in 1904

He was remarkably practical, submitting each work to a detailed examination, drawing attention to our awkward places and mistakes in very apt comments."¹¹²

Dvořák's method was focused on the investiture of responsibility in the student, and he was deeply concerned with the encouragement of individual expression and compositional independence. Josef Michl observed,

It can be easily imagined that such work was not as a rule easy, the less so as the Master did not usually indicate how the correction was to be carried out—and *[he] himself only very rarely made the correction. And here we strike on the most typical feature of his method; if he found something (and that happened very often) with which he did not agree and which he wanted to have differently and better written, he forced us to think about it and did not give in until we had found a better way...* "What good would it be to you," he would often say, "if I were to write it the way it should be! It wouldn't be yours then and every musician worth his salt would know that somebody had put it right for you. Anybody who wants to compose must get accustomed to think and work independently!"¹¹³

¹¹¹ Josef Suk, "Some Reminiscences," in Dvořák, Antonín, and Otakar Šourek, *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsourm (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 138-39

¹¹² Vítězslav Novák, "The Funeral Oration at Dvořák's Grave," in Dvořák, Antonín, and Otakar Šourek, *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsourm (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 137

¹¹³ Josef Michl, "A Year Under Dvořák," in Dvořák, Antonín, and Otakar Šourek, *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsourm (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 137-38

Conclusion

In many ways, this essay may have only complicated an understanding of Dvořák's American tenure. But I have not been concerned with *an* answer, or arriving at a single mode of conceiving of his time here. Throughout the liberal arts, scholars have benefitted through approaching old questions with new critical frameworks. In music and in history, we have benefitted from Marxist critiques and feminist critiques of individuals, works, and cultural and historical trends. It has been my aim here to contribute a "pragmatist's critique" of Dvořák's Austro-Hungarian context and his American tenure. It is my hope that by viewing Dvořák through this different lens, we might arrive at some interesting parallels and juxtapositions.

The subtitle of William James's 1907 *Pragmatism is A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, a phrase that resonates throughout this essay. Dvořák's reputation as a compositional conservative is not entirely undeserved, but the Bohemian composer was always teasing out a new way of doing: He developed his own orchestral forms, such as the *dumka* and *furiant*, and imbued his symphonic works with rhythmic and harmonic motives that suggested national folk idioms. Dvořák's flirtations with programmatic music are part of a continuous, ever-changing tradition of art music with extra-musical associations. Dvořák's compositional pragmatism and diversity of forms, his readiness to draw from a variety of intellectual trends, and his willingness to play the Bohemian, the cosmopolitan, and the American all come out of an *old way of thinking*: the classical composer whose output and style is dictated not by abstract philosophy, but practical realities and need.

In this sense Dvořák falls closely in step with James's pragmatist philosophy. Perhaps because of his Bohemian identity and his exclusion from the self-conscious and self-perpetuating Austro-German canon, Dvořák did not feel tied to a particular aesthetic ideal. As a result, his composition and pedagogy reflect a distinct individuality.

There are further realms in which we might discuss Dvořák's pragmatic approach. Certainly more could be written on Dvořák the Indianist, his long interest in Longfellow's *Hiawatha* (which he read in both English and Czech) as well as the relationship of Seidl and Edward MacDowell to that work and to Indianist composition.

A wealth of correspondence relating to the subject of this essay is available only in Czech, the investigation of which would perhaps reveal Dvořák's own written thoughts on the social and intellectual currents in his adopted home.

But I hope that this essay will have contributed to an evolving portrait of the Bohemian composer. Dvořák was a complicated character, full of many seeming contradictions. But in fact, in Dvořák's democratic and populist ethos, his composition, and pedagogy, we find a deep personal pragmatism that locked him right in line with the philosophical spirit of the American *fin de siècle*.

Appendix A
Works Composed by Antonín Dvořák between 1892 and 1895,
During His Tenure at the National Conservatory

Works for Orchestra

- Symphony No. 9 in E Minor “From the New World,” B. 178 (1st performance in New York, 16 December 1893)
- Rondo in G Minor for cello and orchestra, B. 181
- *Klid (Silent woods)* for cello and orchestra, B. 182 (Arr. from B. 133/5)
- Cello Concerto in B Minor, B. 191
- Othello, Concert Overture, B. 174
- Suite in A Major, B. 190 (Arr. from B. 184)

Chamber Music

- String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, “The American,” B. 179 (1st performance in Boston, MA, 1 January 1894)
- String Quintet in E Major, “The American,” B. 180 (1st performance in New York, 12 January 1894)
- Sonatina in G Major for violin and piano, B. 183
- Suite in A Major, B. 184 (Known earlier as Op. 101; orchestrated as B. 190)

Works for Keyboard

- (8) *Humoresky*, B. 187
- 2 Pieces, B. 188: 1. *Ukolébavka (Lullaby)*, 2. *Capriccio*

Opera

- *Dimitrij* (ii), B. 186 (Revised version of B. 127; 1st performance at Prague, 7 November 1894)

Cantatas, Masses, and Oratorios

- “Columbian” Te Deum, B. 176 (1st performance in New York, 21 October 1892)
- The American Flag, B. 177 (1st performance in New York, 4 May 1895)

Songs and Duets

- (10) *Biblické písně (Biblical songs)*, 185: (Bible of Kralice): 1. *Oblak a mrákota jest vůkol Něho (Clouds and Darkness)*, 2. *Skrýše má a pavezá má Ty jsí (Thou art my hiding-place)*, 3. *Slyš, ó Bože, slyš modlitbu mou (Give ear to my prayer)*, 4. *Hospodin jest můj pastýř (The Lord is my shepherd)*, 5. *Bože! Bože! Píseň novou (I will sing a new song)*, 6. *Slyš, ó Bože, volání mé (Hear my cry)*, 7. *Při řekách babylonských (By the rivers of Babylon)*, 8. *Popatřiž na mne a smiluj se nade mnou (Turn thee unto me)*, 9. *Pozdvihuji oči svých k horám (I will lift up mine eyes)*, 10. *Zpívejte Hospodinu píseň novou (O sing unto the Lord a new song)*

Arrangements

- Arrangement of Stephen Foster’s *Old Folks at Home*, B. 605 (1st performance in New York, 23 January 1894)

Appendix B
Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson's Oration

Anon., "Antonín Dvořák Leads at Music Hall." In the *New York Herald*, 22 October 1892.

"Over all this wide land to-day men and women have been celebrating the finding of this continent with such zeal you would think that each one had a hand in the discovery... It is fitting that music should take her part in the great festival because music is the only art which, since Columbus, has also discovered a new world. We meet to celebrate that newer discovery, to lay upon the bier of Columbus the only wreath that has wholly blossomed since his time: the one art that is post-Columbian..."

"Let me not do injustice to the modest germs of music existing before the day of Columbus. Music was long since crowned in advance when the early Christian artists painted Christ as Orpheus. But the real birthday of music—of modern music—came with curious precision almost exactly one hundred years after the discovery of America. Music is the only art that could say to Columbus what Mark Twain said at the tomb of Adam, 'Noble old man! I was not permitted to see you; neither were you permitted to see me'..."

"The triumphs of our own land in music, like most of our artistic triumphs, lie in the future, if anywhere. If we were all made of unmixed English blood, we might have long to wait for them. Moreover the material successes must come first. If you choose the picked young men of each college class and send them out on railroads art must wait, or if a man of commanding genius give half his energies to the building of steam engines and only the other half to making symphonies, the chances are that the steam engines may go at high pressure, but the symphonies will not. But we shall not always be thus one sided, and, moreover, we are not all of English blood. We stand in one of the great German cities of the world and the other great musical race of Europe is making our very byways Italian.

"And we draw to-night on that wondrous country where, it used to be said, every child was tested early in the cradle to see whether he would choose the violin bow or the rifle with his baby hand, the country which has so identified itself with the fire of genius that Boyle O'Reilly makes the burden of his best lyric run thus:—

'I had rather live in Bohemia
Than in any other land.'

"Let us hope that our guest to-night will at least not share this opinion, that he may consent to transplantation and help add the new world of music to the continent which Columbus found."

Appendix C
Works Composed by Antonín Dvořák before 1892
with Czech Programmatic Titles or on Czech Texts

Works for Orchestra

- *Mazurek* for Violin and Orchestra, B. 90; Works for Orchestra: Three nocturnes, No.2: *Májová noc* (*May night*), B. 30;
- *Symfonická báseň* (*Symphonic Poem*) (*Rhapsodie*), B. 44;
- *Symfonické variace* (*Symphonic Variations*) B. 70;
- *Slovanské tance* (*Slavonic Dances* 1st set), B. 83;
- *Slovanské tance* (*Slavonic Dances* 2nd set), B. 147 (B. 145, orchestrated);
- Slavonic Rhapsodies, B. 86;
- *Slavnostní pochod* (*Festival March*) B. 88;
- *Česká suita* (*Czech Suite*), B. 93;
- *Pražské valčíky* (*Prague Waltzes*), B. 99;
- *Polka 'Pražským akademikům'* (*For Prague Students*), B. 114;
- *Kvapík* (*Galop*), B. 119;
- *Legendy* (*Legends*), B. 122;
- *Domov můj* (*My Homeland*), B. 125a;
- *Husitská, dramatická ouvertura* (*Hussite overture*), B. 132;
- *V přírodě* (*In Nature's Realm*), B. 168;
- *Karneval* (*Carnival*), B. 169;

Chamber Music

- *Maličkosti* (*Bagatelles*), B. 79;
- *Mazurek*, B. 89;
- *Drobnosti* (*Miniatures*), B. 149;
- *Romantické kusy* (*Romantic pieces*), B. 150;
- *Ohlas písní* (*Echo of Songs*), B. 152;
- *Dumky*, B. 166;
- *Slovanský tance* (*Slavonic Dance*), B. 170;
- *Slovanský tance* (*Slavonic Dance*), B. 172;
- *Klid* (*Silent Woods*), B. 173;

Works for Keyboard

- *Slovanské tance* (*Slavonic Dances* 1st set), B. 78;
- *Lístky do památníku* (*Album Leaves*), B. 109;
- *Otázka* (*Question*) 128bis,
- *Ze Šumavy* (*From the Bohemian Forest*), B. 133: 1. *Na přástkách* (*In the Spinning-Room*), 2. *U černého jezera* (*By the Black Lake*), 3. *Noc filipojakubská* (*Witches' Sabbath*), 4. *Na čekání* (*On the Watch*), 5. *Klid* (*Silent Woods*), 6. *Z bouřlivých dob* (*In Troublous Times*);
- *Dumka*, B. 136;
- *Slovanské tance* (*Slavonic Dances* 2nd set), B. 145;
- *Dvě perličky* (*Two little pearls*), B. 156: 1. *Do kola* (*In a Ring*), 2. *Dědeček tančí s babičkou* (*Grandpa Dances with Grandma*);

- *Lístek do památníku (Album Leaf)*, B. 158;
- *Poetické nálady (Poetic tone pictures)*, B. 168: 1. *Noční cestou (Twilight Way)*, 2. *Žertem (Toying)*, 3. *Na starém hradě (In the Old Castle)*, 4. *Jarní (Spring Song)*, 5. *Selská balada (Peasant Ballad)*, 6. *Vzpomínání (Reverie)*, 7. *Furiant*, 8. *Rej skřítků (Goblins' Dance)*, 9. *Serenade*, 10. *Bacchanalia*, 11. *Na táčkách (Tittle-Tattle)*, 12. *U mohyly (At a Hero's Grave)*, 13. *Na svaté hoře (On the Holy Mountain)*;

Cantatas, Masses, and Oratorios

- *Hymnus: Dědicové bílé hory (Hymn: the Heirs of the White Mountain)* B. 27;
- *Svatební košile (The Spectre's Bride)*, B. 135;
- *Svatá Ludmila (St. Ludmilla)*, B. 144;

Other Choral Works

- *Čtyři sbory (Four Choruses)*, B. 59: 1. *Misto klekání (Evening's blessing)*, 2. *Ukolébavka (Lullaby)*, 3. *Nepovím (I don't say it)*, 4. *Opuštěný (The Forsaken One)*;
- *Sbotové písně (Choral Songs)*, B. 66: 1. *Převozníček (The Ferryman)*, 2. *Milenka travička (The Beloved as Poisoner)*, 3. *Huslař (The Fiddler)*;
- *Kytice z českých národních písní (Bouquet of Czech Folksongs)*, B. 72: 1. *Zavedený ovčák (The Betrayed Shepherd)*, 2. *Úmysl milencin (The Sweetheart's Resolve)*, 3. *Kalina (The Guelder Rose)*, 4. *Český Diogenes (Czech Diogenes)*;
- *Píseň čecha (The song of a Czech)*, B. 73;
- *Z kytice národních písní slovanských (From a bouquet of Slavonic Folksongs)*, B. 76: 1. *Žal (Sorrow)*, 2. *Divná voda (Miraculous Water)*, 3. *Děvče v háji (The Girl in the Woods)*;
- *Pět sborů (Five Partsongs)*, B. 87: 1. *Pomluva (Village Gossip)*, 2. *Pomořané (Dwellers by the Sea)*, 3. *Přípověď lásky (The Love Promise)*, 4. *Ztracená ovečka (The Lost Lamb)*, 5. *Hostina (The Sparrow's Party)*;
- *Moravské dvojzpěvyh (Moravian Duets)*, B. 107;
- *V přírodě (In Nature's Realm)*, B. 126: 1. *Napadly písně v duši mou (Music Descended to my Soul)*, 2. *Večerní les rozvázal zvonky (Bells Ring at Dusk)*, 3. *Žitné pole, žitné pole (The Rye Field)*, 4. *Vyběhla bříza běličká (The Silver Birch)*, 5. *Dnes do skoku a do písničky! (With Dance and Song)*;
- *Hymna českého rolnictva (Hymn of the Czech peasants)*, B. 143;

Songs and Duets

- *Cypřiše (Cypresses)*, B. 11: 1. *Vy vroucí písně (Sing fervent songs)*, 2. *V té sladké moci (When thy sweet glances)*, 3. *V tak mnohém srdci mrtvo jest (Death reigns)*, 4. *Ó duše drahá jedinká (Thou only dear one)*, 5. *Ó byl to krásný zlatý sen (Oh, it was a lovely golden dream)*, 6. *Já vím, že v sladké naději (I know that on my love)*, 7. *Ó zlatá rože, spanilá (O charming golden rose)*, 8. *O naši lásce nekvete (Never will love lead us)*, 9. *Kol domu se ted' potácím (I wander oft)*, 10. *Mne často týrá pochyba (Tormented oft by doubt)*, 11. *mé srdce často v bolesti (Downcast am I)*, 12. *Zde hledím na ten drahý list (Here gaze I)*, 13. *Na horách ticho a v údolí ticho (Everything's still)*, 14. *Zde v lese u potoka (In deepest forest glade)*, 15. *Mou celou duši zádušně (Painful emotions Peirce my soul)*, 16. *Tam stojí stará skála (There*

- stands an ancient rock*), 17. *Nad krajem vévodi lehký spánek (Nature lies peaceful)*, 18. *Ty se ptáš proč moje zpěvy bouří (You are asking why)*;
- *Dvě písně pro baryton (Two Baritone Songs)*, B. 13: 1. *Kdybys, milé děvče (If dear lass)*, 2. *A kdybys písní stvořená (If only there were a song)*;
 - *Písně (Songs)*, B. 23: 1. *Lipy (Lime Trees)*, 2. *Proto (The Reason)*, 3. *Překážky (Obstacles)*, 4. *Přemítání (Meditation)*, 5. *Vzpomínání (Remembrance)*;
 - *Sirotek (The Orphan)*, B. 24;
 - *Rozmarýna (Rosmarine)*, B. 24bis;
 - *Písně z Rukopisu Královédvoyského (Songs from the Dvůr Králové Manuscript)*, B. 30: 1. *Žežhulice (The Cuckoo)*, 2. *Opuštěná (Forsaken)*, 3. *Skřivánek (The Lark)*, 4. *Růže (The Rose)*, 5. *Kytice (Flowery Message)*, 6. *Jahody (The Strawberries)*;
 - *Moravské dvojzpěvy (Moravian Duets)*, B. 50: 1. *Proměny (Destined)*, 2. *Rozloučení (The Parting)*, 3. *Chudoba (Poverty, or The Silken Band)*, 4. *Vuře šuhaj, vuře (The Last Wish)*;
 - *Moravské dvojzpěvy (Moravian Duets)*, B. 60: 1. *A já ti uplynu (From thee now)*, 2. *Velet', vítačku (Fly sweetsongster)*, 3. *Dyby byla kosa nabróšená (The Slighted Heart)*, 4. *V dobrým sme se sešli (Parting Without Sorrow)*, 5. *Slavíkovský polečko malý (The Pledge of Love)*;
 - *Moravské dvojzpěvy (Moravian Duets)*, B. 62: 6. *Holub na javoře (Forsaken)*, 7. *Voda a pláč (Sad of Heart)*, 8. *Skromná (The Modest Maid)*, 9. *Prsten (The Ring)*, 10. *Zelenaj se, zelenaj (Omens)*, 11. *Zajatá (The Maid Imprisoned)*, 12. *Neveta (Comfort)*, 13. *Šípek (The Wild Rose)*, 14. *Život vojenský (The Soldier's Farewell)*
 - *Večerní písně (Evening Songs)*, B. 61: 1. *Ty hvězdičky tam na nebi (The stars that twinkle in the sky)*, 2. *Mně zdálo se žes umřela (I dreamt that you were dead)*, 3. *Já jsem ten rytíř z pohádky (I am that knight of fairy tale)*, 4. *Když Bůh byl nejvíc rozkochán (When God was a happy mood)*
 - *Moravské dvojzpěvy (Moravian Duets)*, B. 69: 1. *Možnost (Hoping in Vain)*, 2. *Jablko (Greeting from Afar)*, 3. *Věneček (The Crown)*, 4. *Hoře (The Smart)*
 - *Hymnus k Nejsvětější Tvojici (Hymn to the Most Holy Trinity)*, B. 82
 - *Dětská píseň (Child's Song)*, B. 113
 - *Na tej našej střeše laštovečka (There on our roof a swallow carries)*, B. 118
 - (6) *Písně (Songs)*, B. 123
 - (4) *Písně (Songs)*, B. 124
 - *Kačena divoká (The Wild Duck)*, B. 140
 - *V národním tónu (In Folk Tone)*, B. 146: 1. *Dobrou noc, má mila (Good-night, my darling)*, 2. *Žalo dievča, žalo trávu (When a maiden was a-mowing)*, 3. *Ach, není, není tu, co by mě těšilo (There is nothing here to comfort me)*, 4. *Ej, mám já koňa faku (I have a faithful mare)*
 - (8) *Písně milostné (Love Songs)*, B. 160

Appendix D
Boston Symphony Orchestra
Dvořák Performance History 1892-1895

- 29, 30 January 1892: Three *Slovanské tance*.¹¹⁴
- 5, 6 February 1892: *Symfonické variace* (*Symphonic Variations*) B. 70 (Planned but apparently never produced).¹¹⁵
- 26, 27 February 1892: Symphony No. 8 in G Major (American premier).¹¹⁶
- 28, 29 October 1892: Suite for Orchestra in D Major, Op. 39.¹¹⁷
- 24, 26 November 1892: Dramatic Overture, “Husitska,” Op. 67 (Boston premier).¹¹⁸
- 29, 30 November 1892: Requiem in B-flat minor (Dvořák conducting).¹¹⁹
- 24, 25 February 1893: Symphony in D Minor, No. 2, Op. 70.¹²⁰
- 7, 8 April 1893: Scherzo Capriccioso, Op. 66.¹²¹
- 20, 21 October 1893: Slavonic Rhapsody No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 45.¹²²
- 7 November 1893: Slavonic Rhapsody No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 45 at (Ford’s Grand Opera House, Baltimore).¹²³
- 29, 30 December 1893: Symphony No. 9 in E minor, “From the New World,” Op. 95 (MS.) (Boston premier).¹²⁴
- 19, 20 October 1894: Selections from the Spectre’s Bride.¹²⁵
- 4, 5 January 1895: Dvořák Overture “Carneval” (Boston premier).¹²⁶
- 25, 26 January 1895: Symphony No. 9 in E minor, “From the New World,” Op. 95.¹²⁷
- 1, 2 March: Klid or Waldesruhe (Silent Woods), B. 173.¹²⁸

¹¹⁴ C. A. Ellis Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Season 1891-92: Programme*, Vol. 14 (Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1892), 451, 475.

¹¹⁵ C. A. Ellis Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Season 1891-92: Programme*, Vol. 15 (Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1892), 487.

¹¹⁶ C. A. Ellis Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Season 1891-92: Programme*, Vol. 17 (Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1892), 559.

¹¹⁷ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Twelfth Season 1892-93: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1892), 75.

¹¹⁸ Op. cit., 183.

¹¹⁹ See Footnote 42: Clapham confirms this joint concert with the Cecilia Society of Boston, but concert listings in the *Boston Daily Globe* do not specify the orchestra as the BSO.

¹²⁰ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Twelfth Season 1892-93: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1892), 547.

¹²¹ Op. cit., 727.

¹²² William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893), 39. This page number references 39 in the traveling season program of the BSO. In bound editions, it comes behind the complete year’s listing of the subscription series programs.

¹²³ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893), 3.

¹²⁴ Op. cit., 327.

¹²⁵ C. A. Ellis Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Season 1894-95: Programme*, Vol. 2 (Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1894), 43.

¹²⁶ C. A. Ellis Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Season 1894-95: Programme*, Vol. 11 (Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1894), 403.

¹²⁷ C. A. Ellis Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Season 1894-95: Programme*, Vol. 13 (Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1895), 483.

¹²⁸ Op. cit., 633.

Additional Performances not Given by the BSO

- 28 September 1893: Worcester, Massachusetts Festival: 149th Psalm and *the Hussite Overture*. (Dvořák conducting).
- 1 January 1894: Kneisel Quartet: String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, “American” (World premier).¹²⁹

Appendix E For National Music

Anon., “For National Music.” In the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. 13 August 1893.

FOR NATIONAL MUSIC DVOŘÁK, THE GREAT BOHEMIAN ARTIST, EXPLAINS HIS IDEAS.

Work Expressing Truly American Characteristics Must Be Based on the Simple Melodies of the South or Others Akin to Them—How He Absorbs Their Spirit in Preparing to Give Them Expression—Stoughton Musical Society to Give Concerts of Historical Interest.

Anton Dvořák, the great Bohemian composer, whose presence in American has given decided impetus to musical art, stands at the front of the nationalists in music. His recent announcement of the theory that “in the negro melodies we find a sure foundation for a national school of American music” has resulted in widespread discussion and expression of opinion. Having the courage of his convictions Dvořák proposes to prove the value of these melodies, and the material for his new symphony is founded largely on plantation tunes. By eminent example he has already turned attention to the wealth of the folk music of Bohemia. In England he achieved a recognition that has had a direct outcome, a general and increasing desire for more music of this style and Bohemian opera will shortly be heard in London. The fresh originality and naturalness of Dvořák’s music, as well as the varying rhythm and color, combined with classical form, give to it worth as well as popularity. His first opera, owing to the strong impression that Wagner’s work had made upon him, proved a failure. Striking out in new lines and rewriting the work some years later it won popularity because of the national tinge and originality it displayed. Bohemia, Russia, and Poland, nearly allied in folk music, and yet each with distinct traits, have afforded material for the success of many modern composers. It is, however, notably evident that that success is greatest in each instance where the composer treats themes of his own land. Liszt, Tchaikowsky, Dvořák, have each given to their own work the vital significance of local color through this very fact.

Dr. Dvořák’s theory, which, in this present instance has the advantage of being obtained from the composer personally, is this:

“Every nation has its music. There is Italian, German, French, Bohemian, Russian; why not American music? The truth of this music depends upon its characteristics, its color. I do not mean to take these melodies, plantation, Creole or Southern, and work them out as themes; that is not my plan. But I study certain melodies

¹²⁹ Tibbetts, 14-19. Op. 96, B. 179, composed 1893.

until I become thoroughly imbued with their characteristics and am enabled to make a musical picture in keeping with and partaking of those characteristics. The symphony is the least desirable of vehicles for the displaying of this work, in that the form will allow only a suggestion of the color of that nationalism to be given. Liberty in this line is never allowable. Opera is by far the best mode of expression for the undertaking, allowing as it does of freedom of treatment. My plan to work in this line is simple, but the attainment is subtle and difficult because of the minute and conscientious study demanded and the necessity to grasp the essence and vitality of the subject. I have just completed a quintet for stringed instruments, written lately at Spielville [*sic*], Ia. The quintet will be played in New York during the winter. In this work I think there will be found the American color with which I have endeavored to infuse it. My new symphony is also on the same lines—namely: an endeavor to portray characteristics, such as are distinctively American. At present I have studying with me in New York seven pupils; next year I shall have a much larger number. I take only those far advanced in composition; that is, understanding thorough bass, form and instrumentation. The most promising and gifted of these pupils is a young Westerner, Stratthotte by name, a native of St. Louis. A suite of “Creole Dances” written by him and which contain material that he has treated in a style that accords with my ideas, will be given in New York during the winter. Gottschalk also recognized and worked upon this plan.”

Meets a Common Objective

Foreign artists visiting the Exposition have expressed regret and surprise that so many American subjects have been chose for portrayal by American painters. They have also stated that the way to get a truly American school is to secure the best teachers obtainable and have the attention of the student directed about the things about them. This would seem in keeping with Dvořák’s theories, regarding which so many conflicting statements have been made, and such wide controversy awakened as to give this clear personal declaration especial interest.

Appendix F

Boston Symphony Orchestra Program Notes on the Symphony No. 9 in E minor, “From the New World.”

William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893)
Friday 29 and Saturday 30 December 1893.

When Dr. Dvořák announced last spring that he thought the Negro melodies might prove a good *Volkslied* foundation for the development of a characteristically “national” school of music in America, the true gist of his remark was very widely misunderstood. Many, if not most, people took him to mean by “Negro melodies” the popular songs of our older “Negro Mistsrelsy,” such things, for instance, as “Old Folks at Home,” “Old Uncle Ned,” and other similar tunes by the late Stephen Collins Foster. Certainly, it might be said that Foster’s songs, although written not over half a century ago, have grown to be more genuinely American folk-songs than any other melodies we have in this country; but that they could be taken as germs of anything worthy to be called symphonic developments would hardly have entered the head of any musician.

They were first brought to public notice by Negro minstrel troupes (of the burnt-cork type), and have thus become surrounded with Negro associations in the minds of most of us. But they are really quite innocent of any of the special characteristics of Negro music, even of such music as was currently sung by the Negro slaves on Southern plantations in the old *ante-bellum* days. At best, they may have reflected something of the Negro character (as it was known to the whites), much as the so-called “Turkish” music of Mozart and Beethoven, with its big-drum and cymbals, and piccolo-flute, reflected the Ottoman character (as it was known to Europeans). But the reflection was purely ideal in both cases. Mozart’s and Beethoven’s “Turkish” music, with its strongly marked rhythm, sharp mordents, and tart instrumentation, was at best an European’s musical picture of what he imagined to be Turkish characteristics; musically speaking, it had, however, not a single point of resemblance to Turkish music; indeed, it was as far from being like Turkish music as music well could be. In the same way, Foster’s songs were, very likely, just such music as an Anglo-Saxon American (born and bred in the North, too) might have considered as somehow suggestive of Negro life and appropriate for Negroes to sing but of anything like real Negro music they bore not a trace.

What Dr. Dvořák meant by “Negro melodies,” as a *Volkslied* foundation for a national school of American composition, was the music sung by the real Negroes themselves (not their burnt-cork parodists) on the Southern plantations, — a different matter altogether. The origin of most of these melodies is as yet to a great extent problematical; it is highly probable that they are for the most part of very mixed origin. Native African elements are undoubtedly to be found in them; but the form in which they have been handed down by oral tradition in the South has probably been considerably modified by French, Hispano-Indian, and Methodist camp-meeting influences; all that we know definitely is that, as folk-songs, they are the popular music of the Southern American Negro, and that they have a sharply marked character of their own. Much of the thematic material in this last symphony of Dr. Dvořák’s is borrowed from genuine Negro music; in this work he has taken a step toward realizing a characteristic school of American music from his point of view.

The symphony is in the four regular symphonic movements, each of which is developed in tolerable adherence to symphonic traditions. It is scored for the ordinary modern full orchestra.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ William F. Apthorp, with C. A. Ellis, Manager, *Boston Symphony Orchestra: Thirteenth Season 1893-94: Programme* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1893), 329-332. In making a parallel the “Turkish” elements of Mozart’s repertoire, Apthorp strikes upon a very important theme: Foster’s “Negro melodies” are not genuine representations of their suggested source material. They merely present a white, predominantly Northern imagination or conception of the plantation song, polished and adapted for parlor performance. Dvořák’s pursuit of African-American and American Indian song was a much more active, ethno-musicological endeavor, one which Henry Edward Krehbiel would pursue further in his 1914, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music*.

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In her preface, Solie observes that while "Dvořák's impressions of the music of African-Americans and of American Indians, and his understanding of their role in American urban culture, may seem quixotic today... there is no question that he took an earnest and energetic interest in the search for a national musical identity which occupied many American composers at the time." In this 1895 essay, Dvořák suggests the two essential aspects of the American character are "the unbounded patriotism and capacity for enthusiasm."

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