2026-27 SEASON

UKIAH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Richard Loheyde, Music Director

An American Tribute

featuring soloist & composer

Jeff Ives, viola

SATURDAY
SEPT 12
7:30 PM

SUNDAY
SEPT 13
2:00 PM

MENDOCINO COLLEGE CENTER THEATRE

IN COLLABORATION WITH MENDOCINO COLLEGE
MENDOCINO-LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

2026-2027 Season Concerts

Dec 5/6, 2026 Cohen Inspirations
with Jeremy Cohen, violinist

Repertoire includes
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Ernest Bloch - Nigun Improvisation from Baal Shem
Benjamin Britten – Spring Symphony

Feb 6/7, 2027 A Beethoven 200th
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Jason Eckl - Concerto for the Modern Woman *(premiere)*
Ludwig van Beethoven - Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93

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An American Tribute

Rissolty, Rossolty — Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901 - 1953)

Romance for Viola and Orchestra in F major, Op. 85 — Max Bruch (1838 - 1920)

Jeff Ives, viola

The Song of Hiawatha: Overture, op. 30, No. 3 — Samuel Coleridge Taylor (1875 - 1912)

Unspoken Water — Jeff Ives (b.1969)

15 minute intermission

Symphony No. 9 in E minor "from the New World" — Antonin Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

I. Adagio – Allegro molto
II. Largo
III. Scherzo: Molto vivace – Poco sostenuto
IV. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Program notes are by Dana Ames (except as indicated) and, along with biographical information, are on the next few pages

Richard Loheyde

Music Director

Dr. Richard Loheyde is an accomplished conductor and educator with a proven record of orchestral leadership and training. He served as the conductor of the Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra for thirteen seasons, during which time the orchestra was named "Youth Orchestra of the Year" by Classics Alive. During this time he led more than twenty Pops and family concerts as conductor of the Santa Rosa Symphony Family Concert Series.

His previous roles include faculty member at Sonoma State University, Director of Orchestral Activities at the University of Evansville, Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Music Director of the University of Texas University Orchestra, and Music Director of the Owensboro Symphony Youth Orchestra. His guest conducting experience includes engagements with the Austin Symphony Orchestra, the Austin Civic Orchestra and Opera, the Nebraska Honors Orchestra, the Iowa State University Symphony Orchestra, and the International Music Camp Orchestras.

Dr. Loheyde began his music studies as a violinist, with early training at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, the Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras, and the Tanglewood Music Center, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Richard has music degrees from the University of Michigan, the University of Connecticut, and the University of Texas at Austin. He received further conducting training at the Chautauqua Institution and the Brevard Music Center. His conducting collaborations include concerts with Midori, John Corigliano, Peter Schickele, and jazz violinist Regina Carter. He is an active clinician and has a thriving violin and viola studio in Sonoma County.

Jeff Ives

Today's Soloist & featured Composer

photo: Olivia Consterdine

Since moving to Northern California in 2000, Jeff has found a rich and welcoming musical home with the area's community orchestras. He plays principal viola in the Symphony of the Redwoods and the Ukiah Symphony. He has also enjoyed playing violin or viola for a variety of local chamber music concerts and musical theater productions over the years.

A native of Connecticut, Jeff studied violin at the Hartt School of Music with members of the Hartford Symphony, and later at the New England Conservatory with James Buswell. In 1991, he earned BAs in Music and English Literature from Tufts University, studying violin with Magdalena Richter, and composition with T.J. Anderson and John MacDonald.

An avid composer since beginning his musical training, Jeff has written many pieces of chamber music for various combinations, as well as works for full orchestra. In recent years, several of these have seen premieres in Northern California, including the *Clarinet Quintet* (2019), a *Sextet for Strings* (2016), and the orchestral tone poems *Ma Maistresse* (2018), *Medea* (2018) and *Unspoken Water* (2023).

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Rissolty, Rossolty: An American Fantasy for Orchestra (1939)

Ruth Crawford Seeger
(1901-1953)

Ruth Crawford Seeger (1920s)

Imagine you are sitting in your elementary school classroom on a Tuesday morning in 1939. As she does every day at 9:15, your teacher tunes the radio in the room to "The American School of the Air". On Tuesdays you get to listen to different kinds of music, but today you are among the nationwide audience (also including many adults who listen regularly) who is hearing Ruth Crawford Seeger's "Rissolty, Rossolty" being performed for the very first time. What kind of start do you think that would give your day?

Today's Ukiah Symphony concert is bracketed by the works of two giants, both deeply classically trained and both steeped in the folk music tradition of their respective countries. Anyone who loves classical music knows of Dvorak. Anyone who loves the American folk music revival of the 1960s owes a monumental debt to Seeger, even though the Seeger name we all recognize is that of her stepson, Pete. But Pete came by his interest in folk music from somewhere.

Ruth Porter Crawford was born in Ohio in 1901, the daughter of a Methodist minister. She began writing poetry and taking piano lessons at age 6, and by the time she graduated from high school in Florida she was studying piano with Madame Valborg Collett, who herself was a student of Agathe Backer Grøndahl, composer, concert pianist and member of Grieg's circle of friends. Ruth started teaching in Jacksonville, and her first compositions were written for her young students.

Ruth moved to Chicago in 1921 to study at the American Conservatory of Music. She planned to only stay for a year, long enough to earn a teaching certificate. But in Chicago she had opportunities unavailable in Jacksonville: she attended many and varied performances, including recitals by Rachmaninoff and Arthur Rubinstein. She continued and intensified her piano study, but shifted her focus from performance to composition, completing her bachelor's degree, and staying on to study for her master's. While at the Conservatory, she was introduced to the work of Scriabin and other Modernist composers, including Henry Cowell; she met Carl Sandburg, whose poems she later set. Though she composed relatively few works, there were enough of them to get her noticed.

From 1926 her pieces were performed at many modern music concerts. In a short biography, David Lewis writes, "Stylistically her work stood out in its uncompromising use of dissonance, contrapuntal ostinati, striking choice of texts and tidy formal construction." Her pieces were characterized by seriousness, not sentiment.

In 1929 Ruth moved to New York to begin study with Charles Seeger, well-known musicologist, composer and teacher (who previously spent a few years as a Music professor at UC Berkeley). Studying with Seeger capped off Ruth's linear, contrapuntal style, placing her firmly within the "ultra-modernist" group emerging in the '20s and '30s. In 1930, Ruth was the first female composer to be awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. She spent her study year listening and composing in Europe, regularly corresponding with Seeger; when she returned, she continued her musical studies with him, and the professional and personal merged. In 1932, Ruth married Charles and gained a ready-made family of three stepsons from Charles' previous marriage. They went on to have four more children, which Ruth described to a friend as "composing babies". She was thrilled to become a mother, something she had always wanted, and was completely devoted to her children.

Though very happy, the Seegers were in a precarious financial situation. The Depression had caught up to artists, and Charles lost his teaching job of 15 years. For the next little while, the Seegers were often reliant on friends for financial support. At the end of 1935, Charles was offered a government job teaching music to displaced, unemployed workers who were resettled into rural camps and were provided work mainly by the WPA. Though they lived in Washington D.C., Charles traveled to these rural areas to set up programs and listen to what the workers themselves sang, working on recording this folk music - from both European and African roots - with the great father-and-son folk song collectors, John and Alan Lomax. When she was able, Ruth went along to transcribe the Lomax's recordings for preservation in the Library of Congress, continuing to transcribe and notate the field recordings at home where she could care for her children. As much as their politics supported the ordinary American workers, through actually spending time with them the Seegers came face to face with their own social class's patronizing attitude toward them and their culture. Their respect for the people from which American folk music sprang

Ruth Crawford Seeger (1940s)

changed from something conceptual and intellectual to a heartfelt regard, and the recording and preserving of American folk music became the direction of their lives for the next 15 years.

Ruth's transcriptions formed the basis of the Lomax's highly regarded book, *Our Singing Country.* Ruth herself published several folk song books for children, along with the very influential *American Folk Songs for Children in Home, School, and Nursery School: A Book for Children, Parents, and Teachers,* and, separately, *Nineteen American Folksongs for Piano.* Her stepson, beloved folk musician Pete Seeger, told an interviewer that he took the songs for his own children's album "straight out of his mother's books". Two of Ruth and Charles' children, Michael and Peggy, also became well-known folk music collectors and performers.

The Seeger Family (1940s)

Ruth was deeply invested in raising her children and in her work compiling American folk music, and she had little time for composing her own music during these years. "I am running a four-ring circus - school teaching, private teaching, books, and four children of my own," Ruth wrote in 1946. She did produce a few pieces, including "Rissolty, Rossolty". She made a start of seriously taking up composition again in the early 1950s, but her life was sadly cut short by cancer at only age 52.

Ruth Crawford Seeger's own compositions were groundbreaking and of the highest quality, clearly stepping into the next level of what was emerging in the early 20th century. And she has connected with thousands of us who would never hear her music in a concert hall by giving our elementary school teachers "Old Dan Tucker", "Shenandoah", "John Henry" and "Buffalo Gals", and our teachers giving those songs to us through music education in the classrooms. On returning to school every September, the first thing this writer would do was to open her desk, find the next California State Series Music Book, take it out and eagerly page through it, anticipating learning the folk songs it contained - some from *Our Singing Country.* Both aspects of Crawford Seeger's life's work are inestimable.

"Rissolty, Rossolty" is a nonsense song with a rollicking tune and rhythm. Crawford Seeger marks the piece with her own Modernist style in the first few measures, and then the piece takes off in a dance. She incorporated the melodies of two other folk songs: "Equinoxal and Phoebe" and "The Last of Callahan". Eventually, a great wave of song wells up and spills out as the piece nears its surprising end, stopping almost like a folk singer would, preparing to begin the next tune.

Riseldy, Roseldy - lyrics

I married a wife in the month of June, Risselty rosselty, now now now!
Risselty rosselty, now now now!
I carried her off by the light of the moon (in a silver spoon)
Risselty rosselty, hey bombosity, nickety nackety,
retrical quality, willaby wallaby now now now!

She combed her hair but once a year, Risselty rosselty, now now now!
With every rake she gave a tear,
Risselty rosselty, hey bombosity, (etc.)

She swept the floor but once a year, Risselty rosselty, now now now!
She swore her broom was much too dear,
Risselty rosselty, hey bombosity, (etc.)

She churned the butter in dad's old boot, Risselty rosselty, now now now!
And for a dasher she uses her foot,
Risselty rosselty, hey bombosity, (etc.)

The butter came out a grizzledy gray, Risselty rosselty, now now now!
The cheese took legs and ran away,
Risselty rosselty, hey bombosity, (etc.)

(Peggy Seeger)
The butter and cheese is on the shelf, Risselty rosselty, now now now!
If you want any more you can sing it yourself,
Risselty rosselty, hey bombosity, (etc.)

Sources, and for more information:

Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). This is the definitive biography.

https://www.peggyseeger.com/ruth-crawford-seeger
https://www.peggyseeger.com/ruth-crawford-seeger/pdf/Dio%20by%20Ellie%20Hisama.pdf

Find the original folk song as "Riseldy Roseldy" on YouTube, many versions; also find Peggy Seeger's rendition of "Equinoxal and Phoebe", along with Rafe Stefanini playing "The Last of Callahan" on his fiddle.

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Romance for Viola and Orchestra, Op. 85

Max Bruch
(1838-1920)

Though Bruch was not an American original, this jewel of a piece transcends national boundaries. Like many of his contemporaries, including Dvořák and the Scandinavians highlighted in the Ukiah Symphony's last concert, Bruch was interested in folk songs and incorporated those tunes into many of his works.

Bruch was born in the bustling, centrally located city of Cologne (Köln). Like many composers, he was a child prodigy, with his mother Wilhelmine, a piano teacher and noted soprano, furnishing his first musical instruction; his first composition at age 9 was a song dedicated to her. Unlike most of his contemporaries, the family never suffered financially, as his father, August, was a lawyer with the Police Department. For most of his life, Bruch was able to earn decent money from his composing and teaching.

Bruch's parents wholeheartedly supported his musical inclinations. (No one seems to have tried to persuade him to become an organist in order to have steady work…) His first serious study was with Ferdinand Hiller, to whom Schumann dedicated his Piano Concerto in A minor. Bruch's skills were well-regarded from the start; at only age 14 he won the Frankfurt Mozart Foundation prize, and his talent was recognized and encouraged by piano virtuoso Ignaz Moscheles, Mendelssohn's great friend. He was encouraged to travel and soak in the opportunities of Europe's cultural centers; in Leipzig, for example, he spent time with Clara Schumann and Anton Rubinstein, and in Berlin with Hans von Bülow and violinist Joseph Joachim. At the close of his formal studies with highly regarded teachers of his day, he settled in Mannheim, where amidst his conducting duties he set to work composing in earnest.

Interestingly, the compositions that brought him his first fame were choral works, which were highly praised; workers in many factories formed choral societies, and those organizations were always looking for new works to perform. Bruch's violin pieces also attracted attention. Although he started his musical journey playing the piano, he got tired of it; he remarked that "the violin can sing a melody much better than a piano, and melody is the soul of music." In particular, the success of his cantata *Fitjof*, and his opera *Die Loreley*, both based on German folk tales, opened doors for him to sustained engagements teaching, composing and conducting. After Mannheim, he took posts in Koblenz, Sondershausen, Berlin and Bonn, where he spent 1873–78 working privately. At the height of his career, he spent three seasons as conductor of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society

Bruch, cont'd

(1880–83). He finally settled into a Professorship at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik in 1890 and remained there until his retirement in 1910; his students included Vaughan Williams and Respighi. Along the way, he married 26-year-old Clara Tuszek in 1881, and by all accounts theirs was a happy marriage. They had four children, two of whom followed their father into the musical world.

Though Bruch's lifetime spans a period of great musical intensity and change, Bruch himself hewed closely to conservative Romanticism, like Brahms. Bruch and Brahms were friends, but Bruch was insecure about his own gifts when comparing himself to Brahms and thought he would be forgotten. Bruch produced works in every musical genre, and though he enjoyed initial success with all of them, as the 19th century rolled along, musical tastes changed. Bruch refused to change with the times and was a dedicated Romanticist until the end; he loathed Wagner and was not impressed by Liszt. His works were deemed "old-fashioned"; despite the consistently favorable opinions of his music by fellow composers and performers, the public moved on to supporting newer composers. In his old age, his life became characterized by great sadness, along with financial struggles. In the lead-up to the First World War, no musical groups in the US or England wanted to program German composers. Performance of Bruch's works was officially restricted in Germany during the Nazi era, in the mistaken belief that he was Jewish because of his name and the continued popularity of his *Kol Nidre*. By the mid-20th century, most of his output was, indeed, forgotten.

Of his immense catalog, Bruch's most-played pieces are his works for strings, including many for soloists and orchestra. The *Romance Op. 85* was composed in 1911, near the end of his life, and is a very typical example of Bruch's consistent style: elegant and rich melodies, imaginative beauty, lyrical energy, balance and clarity and emotional accessibility. This writer finds Bruch's music a real tonic for the soul in our fragmented age.

Bruch Sources, and for more information:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Bruch
https://interlude.hk/max-bruch/
https://www.classical-music.com/features/composers/max-bruch
https://jeanmichelserres.com/2025/01/26/notes-on-max-bruch-and-his-works/#gsc.tab=0

Coleridge-Taylor Sources, and for more information:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Coleridge-Taylor
https://mixedmuseum.org.uk/samuel-coleridge-taylor-at-the-brighton-dome/
https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/music-entertainers/samuel-coleridge-taylor-the-forgotten-composer-who-bridged-cultures-and-challenged-racial-barriers/
https://artuk.org/discover/stories/the-life-and-music-of-samuel-coleridge-taylor

The Song of Hiawatha: Overture, Op. 30 No. 3

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875-1912)

In this the USA's 250th year of existence, our thoughts often turn to the Revolutionary War period. We know that not everyone supported the independence of the Colonies, and some of these Loyalists were Blacks, both enslaved and freed. Many found their way to Nova Scotia, and from there, 1200 of them sailed back to Africa's west coast, to the Protectorate of Sierra Leone which England had established for the settlement of free Blacks. It was from these erstwhile Americans that Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Creole father descended. Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor studied medicine in England but was rarely called upon for his medical skills due to the prejudice of the time. Daniel met Samuel's mother, Alice Martin, while he was in London, and is likely that Daniel did not know Alice was pregnant before he returned to Africa to work as an administrator for the British government. He never met his son.

Alice named the boy Samuel Coleridge Taylor, after the great English poet. Alice remained in the home of her father, a skilled farrier, and it was there that "Coleridge", as they called him, was first raised. There were musicians in Alice's family, and her father Benjamin played the violin; he taught the child how to play, and Taylor's aptitude was immediately recognized. Grandfather paid for his first music lessons. Alice married a railway worker, George Evans, in 1877, and the whole family supported Taylor's musical education. At age 15 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music. He studied under the famed teacher Charles Villiers Stanford, who persuaded him to switch his study emphasis from violin to composition. Taylor subsequently won composition prizes two years in a row. His fellow students included Holst and Vaughan Williams; one of his tutors called him "one of my cleverest pupils."During this time, Taylor met the prolific African American writer Paul Laurence Dunbar, and collaborated with him to set some of Dunbar's poems. Dunbar was also a great influence on Taylor, encouraging him to reach into his African heritage for inspiration. By the time Taylor graduated at age 22, he had landed a plumb professorship at the Crystal Palace School of Music and was conducting the Croydon Conservatoire Orchestra.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor at 23

His pieces began to be published in 1896, including a symphony and chamber works, which were praised for their lyrical intensity.

Coleridge-Taylor, cont'd

(Interestingly, it is said the hyphenated form of his name came about because of a publisher's error; Samuel liked how it looked and sounded, and continued styling himself that way.) His music attracted the attention of Edward Elgar, who recommended him for participation in the prestigious Three Choirs Festival, where his *Ballade in A minor* was premiered. The music director of the Novello publishing house told Elgar that Taylor was "a genius".

In 1899 as his star was rising and he was in the midst of composing his Hiawatha Cantatas, Samuel married Jessie Walmisley, whom he met when they were both students at the Royal College. She was six years older than Samuel; in addition, her entire family, with the exception of a sister who lived in America, were against the relationship from the start. It was only on the eve of the wedding that Jessie's parents were finally convinced of the stability of their love; they did attend the ceremony, and her father even acted as one of the witnesses. The couple later had two children, Hiawatha Bryan and Gwendolen Avril, who eventually followed their father into the world of music, Hiawatha as a compiler and editor, and Avril as a pianist and composer herself.

Coleridge-Taylor was fascinated with the story of Hiawatha. He saw Longfellow's epic 1855 poem - wildly popular for decades in America - as emblematic of the dignity of not only Native Americans, but also of Black people struggling in the wake of slavery. The authenticity of Longfellow's sources didn't matter to Coleridge-Taylor, as much as the picture Longfellow's poetry painted of the hero's journey through joy and celebration, sorrow and mourning, and farewell and transcendence, all against the background of a shimmering, unspoiled natural world. The three cantatas of *The Song of Hiawatha*, composed between 1898 and 1900, span the entire legend: *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, The Death of Minnehaha,* and *Hiawatha's Departure*. The *Overture* was composed as Coleridge-Taylor was also working on *The Death of Minnehaha,* and is most often performed separately from the cantatas.

Hiawatha's Wedding Feast premiered under the baton of Coleridge-Taylor's former teacher C.V. Stanford; in the audience were Sir Arthur Sullivan, Elgar, and Hubert Parry, who all gave it their highest praise. It was an immediate, resounding success. The subsequent cantatas were commissioned while the ink was not yet dry on publication of the first one, and from the start English choral societies began performing it yearly, often as a sort of pageant. The story was engaging, and the music was challenging yet approachable for most amateur singers. This piece alone cemented Coleridge-Taylor's place among the great composers of the early 20th century.

Coleridge-Taylor, cont'd

In spite of his renown, Coleridge-Taylor never knew financial security. At the turn of the 20th century, composers were still paid flat fees on publication of their music and barely received royalties. Coleridge-Taylor sold the score to *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* for 15 guineas, about $2000 in today's money - and that was all he ever got for it. He later learned how to negotiate for royalty payments, but his financial situation was always precarious. Coleridge-Taylor was working so diligently in order to provide for his family that his health suffered. At age 37 he came down with pneumonia; he collapsed on a train platform and died in a hospital a few days later. His untimely death was a shock to the musical world, and more than any other event spurred musical artists in England to form the Performing Right Society, now PRS for Music, Ltd. to protect the value of copyright and to help provide an income for composers, songwriters and music publishers.

Coleridge-Taylor never forgot his African heritage and always called himself "Anglo-African". He participated in W.E.B. DuBois's Pan-African Congress in England, advocating for the independence of the British and other European colonies in Africa. As his career continued, he incorporated more African and African American music into his works. He toured the United States three times. During the first tour in 1904, Theodore Roosevelt received him in the White House, and he became the first Black man to conduct an American orchestra; both events were unprecedented. In 1905, Coleridge-Taylor published his *Twenty Four Negro Melodies*, a collection of African and American songs. He saw these melodies as a counter to the degrading presentation of Black music as portrayed by the types of minstrel shows performed in the late 19th century. In the introduction to the work, he noted: "What Brahms has done for the Hungarian folk-music, Dvořák for the Bohemian, and Grieg for the Norwegian, I have tried to do for Negro melodies." DuBois later wrote of him: "Here is a man who has made the world listen to the music of his race… He has taken the sorrow songs of our people and given them a new voice."

The number of performances of Coleridge-Taylor's works declined through the 20th century. While at least part of this is likely due to racism, it's also due to Romanticism and tonality in music being abandoned in favor of new harmonic structures, Impressionism and atonal Modernist musical forms. Like Elgar and Bruch, the popularity of Coleridge-Taylor's works suffered in the wake of changing tastes of those at the forefront of musical exploration and the public to whom those new composers presented their works. It is very satisfying to this listener that performers are rediscovering the quality of Coleridge-Taylor's compositions and are offering them to the public again.

Unspoken Water

Jeff Ives
(b. 1969)

photo: Adrian Mendoza

Unspoken Water is a single movement work for orchestra written between April and September of 2023. Symphony of the Redwoods commissioned this piece for the California Festival "A Celebration of New Music", which was a collection of concerts featuring newly composed music, performed all over the state from November 3-19, 2023.

The concept of unspoken water comes from Scottish folklore. "Unspoken" water was believed to have healing properties when collected "from under a bridge, over which the living pass and the dead are carried, brought in the dawn or twilight to the house without the bearer's speaking, either in going or returning" (from *The Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*).That water could be imbued with some kind of virtue in this way is a compelling and mysterious idea. Why does speaking break the spell? Why is the bridge important, a site of human activity? Why dawn or dusk? What power is being invoked? So perhaps I could characterize this piece as a tone poem describing the journey to and from the source of water, and the fluctuating internal state of the person performing this ritual. Imagine the effort of carrying the water, the focus on the problem at hand, the discipline and restraint of not speaking, and the intermingled hope and anxiety that the ritual will work.

Program notes kindly provided by Jeff Ives.

Symphony No. 9 in E minor - "From the New World"

Antonin Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Jeannette Meyers had returned home from her musical studies at the Paris Conservatoire with a burning vision and mission: to found an institution dedicated to the cultivation of American music and American composers, supported financially by the American people through the American government, like the great conservatories of Europe. Her husband, Francis Thurber, completely backed Jeannette's goal - not only with his enthusiasm, but also with his wealth from his grocery wholesaling business to kick-start the enterprise.

Dvořák, cont'd

Jeannette had many connections as a musical patron in New York, and she persuaded them, too, to contribute funds for this purpose. In 1885 Jeannette's dream became solid reality, and the doors of the National Conservatory of Music of America opened - not only to the wealthy, but also to women, African Americans, and those with physical disabilities. The school offered generous scholarships and work-study programs to cover tuition; all a person had to bring was talent enough for acceptance into the Conservatory's course of study.

And now Jeannette Meyers Thurber had landed the biggest musical fish in Europe, bringing him up onto the shores of the Hudson River: Antonin Dvořák had agreed to become the Conservatory's Director. Dvořák had never had any desire to live anywhere but his beloved Bohemia and was slow to warm up to the idea at first. But Jeannette had made him an offer he couldn't refuse - and one his wife Anna wouldn't let him refuse! - the enormous sum of $15,000 per year (about half a million in today's money) for three hours of work per day, six days per week, including teaching and conducting, and four months off in the summer. In September 1892, Antonin, Anna, two of their children, Antonin's secretary, the Czech American Josef Kovařík, and the children's nanny arrived in New York City. Dvořák's expressed desire while in this country was to immerse himself in the music of America, especially that of Native Americans and African Americans.

New York, 1893

Jeanette Thurber

Harry T. Burleigh

One of the work-study students at the Conservatory was Harry Burleigh, a Black vocal student, who was the Orchestra Librarian and also did janitorial work, singing with his very melodious baritone voice while sweeping the hallways. Dvořák heard him and forthwith made friends with him; he wanted Burleigh to sing him every Negro melody he knew. Dvořák listened not only to Burleigh, who sang to Dvořák all of his mother's and grandmother's songs he could remember, but to all the singing he heard amidst the hustle and bustle of the Lower East Side. He filled eleven pages of a notebook with "American sketches" even before he was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic to write a symphony. Dvořák was also acquainted with Longfellow's "Hiawatha", which was popular in Europe, and sought out Native Americans where he could in order to listen to them sing, too. All of these filled Dvořák's mind and heart even before he began working on the symphony in February 1893.

Dvořák Residence (left), Catholic Church (right), Spillville, Iowa, late 19th c.

The Dvořák family spent the summer of 1893 in Spillville, Iowa, where the symphony was completed. Spillville was founded and mostly populated by Czech immigrants, among whom was the family of his secretary, Josef Kovařík. Dvořák felt like he was back home at his country house, at least for a little while. He attended daily Mass and played the organ at the Catholic church there. He greatly enjoyed the rural setting in the heart of the Midwest after the intensity of city life and was able to relax and take a real vacation. The character of rural America he absorbed in Iowa shines through the two string quartets he also wrote while in Spillville. His son remembered that he often walked along the town's river and went out to a nearby encampment of Indians to listen to their singing.

Burleigh later said that Dvořák had very quickly "absorbed the spirit" of the traditional Spirituals. While working on the Symphony, Dvořák said in an interview for the New York Herald, "I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called 'Negro melodies'. This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States. When I first came here last year I was impressed by this idea, and it has developed into a settled conviction. I was led to take this view partly by the fact that the so-called plantation songs are indeed the most striking and appealing melodies that have yet been found on this side of the water, but largely by the observation that this seems to be recognized, though often unconsciously, by most Americans." Harry Burleigh always told people who asked that Dvořák worked those "Negro melodies" into the symphony. Burleigh also stated that Dvořák "tried to combine Negro and Indian themes. The Largo movement he wrote after he had read the famine scene in Longfellow's 'Hiawatha.' It had a great effect on him and he wanted to interpret it musically".

The day before the symphony's premiere in December 1893, Dvořák also told the *Herald*, "I have not actually used any of the [Native American] melodies. I have simply written original themes embodying the peculiarities of the Indian music, and, using these themes as subjects, have developed them with all the resources of modern rhythms, counterpoint, and orchestral colour."

Dvořák, cont'd

In the same article, Dvořák stated that he regarded the symphony's second movement as a "sketch or study for a later work, either a cantata or opera ... which will be based upon Longfellow's Hiawatha". Dvořák never actually composed such a piece, but that he thought about writing a Hiawatha opera is intriguing, to say the least. He also wrote that the third movement scherzo was "suggested by the scene at the feast in Hiawatha where the Indians dance".

It's not that the symphony contains explicit quotes from the musical sources in which Dvořák immersed himself, though Burleigh always insisted that the "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" melody could be found in the first movement. It's that Dvořák had a phenomenal ear, absorbed everything he heard, filtered it through his folk-music-sensitive soul and seasoned it with a heartfelt affection for the American people. He produced a work with a truly American sound using European forms - almost like the melting pot that is America. It's said that Jeannette Thurber suggested the title "From the New World".

The symphony was well received in New York; not so much in Boston, where the music nabobs didn't like that the piece was influenced by Negro tunes. Dvořák continued at the Conservatory in spite of his salary being cut in half due to Jeannette and her fellow patrons suffering financial setbacks in the Panic of 1893. He soldiered on, committed to furthering Jeannette's vision, though he was being paid only irregularly. Finally, homesickness also overtook him; in the news he received from Europe he knew his musical reputation had been firmly established, and he decided to go home. He and his family returned to Prague in April 1895. In "Classical Notes", Peter Gutmann wrote in 2001: "When Dvořák returned home in 1895, he left behind a legacy even greater than Mrs. Thurber had dared to dream - the very first piece of serious music that, regardless of its traditional form and disputed sources, somehow managed to embody and convey the American spirit. Wildly popular, Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony served as an ambassador to legitimize American music to the rest of a dubious world and paved the way to acceptance of our 20th Century cultural exports."

Jeannette and her friends were constantly petitioning Congress to fund the National Conservatory, and several bills supporting the concept of it were passed, but no funding was ever forthcoming. After 1900, Jeannette as the driving force was running out of energy, Directors came and went, and there was competition from the Institute of Musical Art, founded in 1904 and backed by Andrew Carnegie (which later became The Juilliard School of Music).

The Conservatory limped along, but the stock market crash of 1929 effectively did away with all of the funding from philanthropist patrons, and there is no mention of it after 1930. Jeannette lived to the age of 96, and even though her school faded away, smaller music schools with similar goals began to spring up around the country because she proved that such an institution could be viable.

The National Conservatory's faculty and students in the Dvořák years had an outsized influence on the next generation of American musicians. Also on the Conservatory faculty at the same time as Dvořák was Victor Herbert, whose operettas would yield songs which have withstood the test of time. Harry Burleigh became composer, arranger and vocal coach; his students included Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson, and among the pallbearers at his funeral were W.C. Handy ("the father of the blues") and Eubie Blake. William Cooke, another of Dvořák's Black students, mentored Duke Ellington. Pianist and composer Rubin Goldmark, one of Dvořák's teaching assistants, was an early piano teacher of Aaron Copland and George Gershwin, and later, somewhat ironically, became the head of Juilliard.

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