

# MIMP

## MIAMI MUSIC PROJECT

### **ROMANTIC PERIOD 1825-1900**

#### History

The skepticism resulting from a clearer understanding of the world and humanity's place in it changed the way people thought of themselves and society. Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) *The Origin of the Species* is one example of the new attitude. The role of science in defining a worldview increased.

Many areas of Europe (especially Italy and Central Europe) struggled to free themselves from foreign control. The years around 1850 saw many revolutions and attempts at revolutions resulting in the rise of European nationalism. At the same time, Germany - never a fully unified country - struggled to create a separate national identity.

More and more, art was removed from functional roles and came to be appreciated for its aesthetic worth. The art of the past became increasingly revered, and our modern notions of the "artist" and of the "fine arts" were born.

#### Music

In the Romantic period, music became more expressive and emotional, expanding to encompass literature, art, and philosophy. It was a period of great change and emancipation. While the Classical era had strict laws of balance and restraint, the Romantic era moved away from that by allowing artistic freedom, experimentation, and creativity. The music of this time period was very expressive, and melody became the dominant feature. Composers even used this expressive means to display nationalism. This became a driving force in the late Romantic period, as composers used elements of folk music to express their cultural identity. Composers also wrote works based on stories of exotic lands and people.

The natural world was considered less a model of perfection and more a source of mysterious powers. Music began to be used to tell stories, or to imply meaning beyond the purely musical. Composers found ways to make their musical ideas represent people, things, and dramatic situations as well as emotional states and even philosophical ideas.

Music was seen less as an occupation and more as a calling. Specialized training institutions (conservatories) replaced the apprentice system of the church and the court. Women found more opportunities for musical expression, especially as performers, but social and cultural barriers still limited their participation as composers.

In a Romantic Style dynamic range is wider, and there is a larger range of sound. There are a greater variety of instruments, including improved or newly invented wind instruments. Melodies are longer, more dramatic and emotional. Tempos are more extreme, and *tempo rubato* is often called for. Harmonies are fuller, often more dissonant. Formal structures are expanded.

Famous Romantic composers include Schumann, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Berlioz Johann Strauss, Brahms, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Wagner, Dvořák, Mahler, Richard Strauss, Puccini, Sibelius, Grieg, Saint-Saëns, Rachmaninoff and Franck.

### **ANTONÍN DVORÁK**

Born: September 8, 1841. Nelahozeves, Czech Republic

Died: May 1, 1904. Prague, Czech Republic

#### **BIO**

Without question, Antonín Dvořák is the greatest Czech of all times. He managed to do what few great artists were able to experience: during his lifetime he was celebrated in continental Europe, in England and the United States; his works even reached far away Australia.

He was a composer and a teacher. His works include operas, symphonic, choral and chamber music. His best-known works include his *New World Symphony*, the *Slavonic Dances*, "American" String Quartet, and Cello Concerto in B minor.



Antonín Dvořák was born into poverty in rural Bohemia (then part of the Austrian Empire, today in the Czech Republic), but was fortunate enough to be able to study in Prague. He developed into a good violist and played in the National Theatre orchestra under Bedrich Smetana, who exerted a strong influence on him. By 1873, Dvořák was making his living primarily as a teacher and composer. Grants from the Austrian government allowed him to concentrate more on composition, and he attracted the attention of Johannes Brahms, who arranged for the publication of his works by Simrock, one of the major European publishers. His reputation grew throughout Europe, especially in England. In 1891 he was appointed to the Prague conservatory.

In 1892, Jeannette Thurber, a wealthy American music patron, offered Dvořák a position as artistic director and composition professor at New York's National Music Conservatory, at a salary of \$15,000, twenty-five times what he got in Prague. It was also clear that the Americans expected him to help pave the way for an "American" musical style. Dvořák took this last charge to heart.

Dvořák spent three years in the United States. Here Dvořák met with Harry Burleigh, one of the earliest African-American composers. Burleigh introduced traditional American Spirituals to Dvořák.

During this time he spent his summers with his family in Czech-speaking community of Spillville in Iowa, to which some of his cousins had earlier immigrated. While there he composed the String Quartet in F (the "American"), the String Quintet in E flat, as well as a Sonatina for violin and piano. Also, while in America, he composed some of his best-known works, including a Cello Concerto in B minor and his *Symphony No.9* "From the New World".



A major economic depression in the 1890s reduced the Thurber fortune. Problems with Mrs. Thurber about Dvořák's salary, together with increasing recognition in Europe and homesickness made him decide to return to Bohemia.

Dvořák returned to his native Prague in 1895. In 1901 he premiered his most important opera, *Rusalka*. During his final years, he concentrated on composing opera and chamber music. Dvořák served as director of the Conservatory in Prague from 1901 until his death from heart failure in 1904.

In Dvořák's own words:

*"My own duty as a teacher... is not so much to interpret Beethoven, Wagner or other masters of the past, but to give what encouragement I can to the young musicians of America. I... hope that just as this nation has already surpassed so many others in marvelous inventions and feats of engineering and commerce, and has made an honorable place for itself in literature in one short century, so it must assert itself in the... art of music... To bring about this result, we must trust to the very youthful enthusiasm and patriotism of this country."*

## Works:

- Orchestral music, including 9 symphonies (No.9 "From the New World", 1893); symphonic poems; other symphonic works including *Slavonic Rhapsodies* (1878) and *Slavonic Dances* (orchestrated 1886)
- Concertos, including 1 cello concerto (1895)
- 14 operas, including *Rusalka* (1901); incidental music
- Choral music, including a cantata (*The Spectre's Bride*, 1884) and a *Requiem* (1890); masses; 1 oratorio; other sacred choral music including *Stabat Mater* (1877); part songs and choral arrangements of Czech folk songs
- Chamber music, including 14 string quartets ("American", 1893), 3 string quintets, 6 piano trios ("Dumky", 1891), 2 piano quartets, and duo sonatas
- Keyboard music, including dances and character pieces; music for 2 pianos (*Slavonic Dances*, 1878); organ music

## STYLE

Dvorák's musical style is generally classical in its approach, owing much to Johannes Brahms, his close friend whom he admired greatly. At the same time his works display the influences of folk music, mainly Czech (*furiant* and *dumky* dance traits, polka rhythms, immediate repetition of an initial bar) but also ones that might equally be seen as American (the use of pentatonic scale based themes).

His interest in nationalist ideals carried over into his work in the United States. In America he discovered the music of Native Americans and African-Americans and declared that in them American composers could find "all that is needed for a great and noble school of music," and the music that he composed in this country shows some of that influence. Scenes from Longfellow's "Hiawatha" inspired the middle two movements of the "New World" Symphony. His "American" quartet in F is based in part on a five-note scale that reflects Native American music he had heard.

Dvorák's challenge to American musicians, as well as his American-inspired pieces, served as a model for many composers. Some of these (such as Henry T. Burleigh) studied with him, while others (such as Amy Beach and William Grant Still) took his suggestion to heart and tried to find their own manner of creating an American music.

## PENTATONIC SCALE

*also called Five-note Scale, or Five-tone Scale*

A pentatonic scale is a musical scale with five pitches per octave (in contrast to a heptatonic (seven note) scale such as the major scale).

Pentatonic scales are very common and are found all over the world, including Celtic folk music, Hungarian folk music, West African music, African-American spirituals, Jazz, American blues music and rock music, children's songs, the Greek traditional music, melodies of Korea, Japan, China, India and Vietnam, the Afro-Caribbean tradition, Polish highlanders from the Tatra Mountains, and Western Classical composers such as French composer Claude Debussy.

There are two common pentatonic scales:

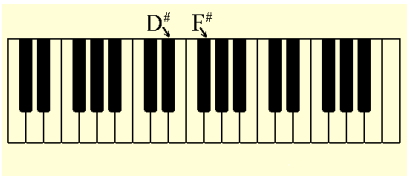
Major scale: intervals of 2-2-3-2-3



Minor scale: intervals of 3-2-2-3-2



The numbers above represents the number of half-steps between the notes. You can, of course, create other interesting 5-note scales.



On a keyboard, you can play such a pentatonic scale by using only the black keys. Start on D# for the minor scale, F# for the major scale.