

Program Notes by Meg Freeman Whalen

The choice of repertoire for Changing Places, Changing Tunes was inspired by a current exhibit at Levine Museum of the New South, Changing Places: From Black and White to Technicolor. A look at the broad impact that newcomers are having on the Charlotte region, this exhibition explores themes connected to immigration and migration: How is cultural identity expressed, preserved, and altered? How is a community changed by its new citizens? How are those citizens changed by their new home? Changing Places, Changing Tunes addresses these questions in music that spans centuries and continents.

OVERTURE FROM *THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO*, K. 384

Composed in 1781-1782.

Premiered on July 16, 1782 in Vienna.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born in Salzburg; January 27, 1756

Died in Vienna; December 5, 1791

The overture to *The Abduction from the Seraglio* was first performed by the Charlotte Symphony on April 25, 1950 with James Christian Pfohl conducting at Piedmont Junior High School. The fourth and most recent performance set was heard on September 12 & 13, 2008 with Christof Perick conducting in the Belk Theater of the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

As the capital of the sprawling Austro-Hungarian Empire, 18th-century Vienna was the most cosmopolitan city of the western world. Not only was it home to people of multiple Central and Eastern European cultures (German, Czech, Slovenian, Polish, Slovak, Croatian, and Hungarian, to name a few), but the intermarriage of the ruling Hapsburg family with other European monarchs – from France to Spain to Sweden – made Vienna the center of a vast set of cultural crossroads. “Newcomers” from across the continent were drawn to its courts, enriching the city with their languages, their cuisine, and their customs (Vienna’s Spanish Riding School, with its noble Lipizzaner horses, is a famous example).

The Turkish newcomers, however, were not exactly welcome guests. On two separate occasions, in 1529 and 1683, the Ottoman Empire laid siege to Vienna in an attempt to overthrow the Hapsburg dynasty. Neither attempt was successful, but while the Turks would never control Vienna, their influence would manifest itself in Viennese culture for years to come, from the first coffeehouse in 1685 (soon a Viennese institution) to Mozart’s opera, composed a century later.

Based on a play by a German writer, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is set in a harem in 16th-century Turkey. Constanze, an Englishwoman, is kidnapped by the Pasha Selim and must be rescued by the hero, her lover Belmonte. Although his attempt fails, the Pasha proves magnanimous and sets the two lovers free.

Mozart's thrilling overture to the comic opera establishes the Turkish atmosphere, particularly with its use of bass drum, cymbals, and triangle – instruments associated with the military march music of the Janissaries, the special bodyguards of the Sultan. His march-inspired music was so exciting, Mozart wrote, "I don't believe anyone could fall asleep (listening to it), even if he hadn't slept at all the night before."

Mozart's zeal for the Janissary style found expression, too, in the beloved third movement of his Piano Sonata No. 11, K. 331 – "Rondo Alla Turca," composed about the same time as his Turkish opera.

The score calls for woodwinds in pairs, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, percussion, and strings.

HUNGARIAN DANCES NOS. 18-21

Composed 1869-1880; orchestration and premiere dates unknown

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born in Hamburg; May 7, 1833

Died in Vienna; April 3, 1897

These are the first performances of these pieces by the Charlotte Symphony.

The overtly ethnic representations in Mozart's opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, were more exception than rule in 18th-century Europe. But in the next hundred years, a profound sense of nationalism would take root, spurring Romantic-era composers to create music infused with ethnic identity – works unique to their own nationality and works distinctively "other."

A key characteristic of 19th-century Romanticism, in fact, was a fascination among writers, thinkers, and artists with the exotic culture of the "folk." And surely no other "folk" in central Europe were as exotic as the Romani people, or Gypsies.

Originating in India, the Romani people made changing places a way of life. Beginning their migration in the 11th century, they traveled for centuries across the Middle East and northern Africa, arriving in Europe in the 1400s. Even in those countries where they settled, the Romani led nomadic lives, frequently persecuted and expelled.

Throughout their migratory history, the Romani have been known as musicians, wandering entertainers whose songs and dances have reflected the influences of their multiple homes. Indian, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Turkish, Eastern European, Spanish – even Celtic traits emerged as they moved across continents.

Indeed, in Hungary, Romani music became so interwoven with the music of the Hungarian people, that by the 19th century the two styles in effect became one. The 19th century was a period of intense nationalism in Hungary, as the Hungarian language was revived and Hungarians danced *csárdás*. But more often than not, the musicians playing

the Hungarian national dance tunes were Romani, and “Hungarian music” and “Gypsy music” became interchangeable concepts throughout Europe, where Romani orchestras were popular entertainment in restaurants and ballrooms.

Schubert, Berlioz, Brahms, and of course, Liszt (who was Hungarian) all wrote Hungarian-flavored pieces. Beginning in the 1850s, Brahms composed his 21 dances over a span of decades. Originally piano duets (piano, four-hands), they were published in two volumes, the first in 1869 and the last in 1880, and were among his most popular works. Brahms himself orchestrated three of the dances (Nos. 1, 3, and 10). Later, the publisher Simrock asked Antonín Dvořák, whose own successful *Slavonic Dances* had been inspired by Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances*, to orchestrate the final five. The final four are performed here.

Inspired by the syncopated *csárdás* (which were in turn a popularization of an earlier music/dance form called *verbunkos*, used in Hungary as a recruitment tool for the military), Brahms’s dances are lively and colorful, with an occasional tinge of melancholy. Number 18 in D Major is marked *Molto vivace*; Number 19 in B Minor, *Allegretto*; Number 20 in E Minor, *Poco allegretto*; and Number 21, also in E Minor, ends the set with a rambunctious *Vivace*.

The score calls for 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings.

LARGO AND ALLEGRO CON FUOCO FROM SYMPHONY NO. 9 IN E MINOR, OP. 95, “FROM THE NEW WORLD”

Composed in 1893

Premiered on December 16, 1893 in New York, conducted by Anton Seidl.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Born in Nelahozeves, Bohemia; September 8, 1841

Died in Prague; May 1, 1904

This symphony was first performed in its entirety by the Charlotte Symphony on October 23, 1947 with Guy Hutchins conducting in the Armory Auditorium. The ninth and most recent performance set was heard on April 18 & 19, 2008 with James Gaffigan conducting in the Belk Theater of the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

Czech composer Antonín Dvořák felt keenly that classical music should be rooted in a sense of place. His first set of *Slavonic Dances* (1878), inspired by Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances*, brought Dvořák both fame and fortune and established him as a champion of nationalism in music.

Fourteen years later, Dvořák was called to the United States to become the director of a new National Conservatory of Music. He remained in America for three years and was profoundly altered by his visit. At that time, the minstrel tunes of Stephen Foster, the

marches of John Philip Sousa, and the songs and spirituals of the Native Americans and African Americans all had a distinctive “new world” sound, but most orchestral music, while by American composers, was cast in the European, and in particular German, mold.

Dvořák challenged American composers to make their own kind of music, to find a uniquely American voice for the American orchestra. He was also inspired by his surroundings to give it a try himself. In 1893, he composed his Ninth Symphony, subtitled “From the New World.”

Dvořák was particularly intrigued by the music of Native Americans and African Americans, and the influence of both cultures is evident in the “New World” Symphony. Before ever coming to the U.S., Dvořák had read Longfellow’s poem, “Hiawatha” and considered composing an opera based on it. Instead, he used scenes from the poem as inspiration for sections of his symphony: The second movement (*Largo*) evokes the funeral of Minnehaha; the third movement (not performed here) suggests an Indian dance.

One of Dvořák’s students at the conservatory, Henry Burleigh, introduced Dvořák to the African American spirituals that had, in the decades since the end of the Civil War, become widely popular in the country, performed by choirs and published as parlor songs. Dvořák found the richest source of “folk” music there: “I am convinced that the future music of this country must be founded on what are called Negro melodies,” he wrote. “These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition, to be developed in the United States. These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are the folk songs of America, and your composers must turn to them.”

The *Largo* is a three-part form, with a wistful English horn melody in the first and third sections that is associated with the spritual “Goin’ Home.” The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, is marked by a vigorous melody in the horns and trumpets.

Dvořák’s symphony is a synthesis of his own Czech nationalism, traditional European orchestral style, and the musical landscape of the “new world” that he inhabited at the time of its creation. “I should never have written the symphony as I have,” he wrote, “if I hadn’t seen America.”

The score calls for 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings.

LA COMPARSA AND SELECTIONS FROM SUITE ANDALUCIA

La Comparsa was composed in 1912; *Suite Andalućia* in 1927.

ERNESTO LECUONA

Born in Havana, Cuba; August 6, 1895

Died in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands; November 29, 1963

The first and only performances of “La Comparsa” took place on June 14 and 16, 1996 with Peter McCoppin conducting Summer Pops concerts in various locations. Of the *Suite Andalućia*, the “Malagueña” has been performed by the Charlotte

Symphony on April 22, 1979 with Leo Dreihuys conducting at Ovens Auditorium and on June 14 and 16, 1996 with Peter McCoppin conducting Summer Pops concerts in various locations; “Andalucía” was performed on June 15, 2008 with Albert-George Schram conducting at Symphony Park.

Like Dvořák and George Gershwin, Ernesto Lecuona wanted his music to reflect a sense of place. Cuban culture was itself a blend – Spanish, African, and elements native to the region – and Lecuona embraced that culture in his compositions,

Born in a village outside of Havana, Lecuona studied at the National Conservatory of Havana and made his first travels outside of his homeland in 1916 (coming to New York) and 1924 (a voyage to Spain). Devoted to his native Cuba, Lecuona nevertheless was compelled by his disagreements with the Castro régime to immigrate to Florida in 1960.

An excellent pianist, Lecuona composed more than 600 works – songs, piano pieces, theatre music, Hollywood film scores, an opera, and a few orchestral works. Becoming the most significant Cuban composer of the 20th century, Lecuona did for Cuban concert music what Gershwin did for American concert music, blending the popular, the indigenous, and the classical into a distinctive style. He founded the Havana Symphony Orchestra, but also a dance band known as the Lecuona Cuban Boys.

Lecuona composed the *Suite Andalucía* for piano in 1927, inspired by his travels in the southern region of Spain. Four of the six selections are performed here in orchestral arrangements, including the famous “Malagueña,” now a pop/jazz standard, to which Lecuona later added lyrics. The dance tune “La Comparsa,” composed when he was just 17, is an excellent example of Lecuona’s popular success in uniting Spanish and Afro-Cuban elements.

The scores call for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 3 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 saxophones, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, guitar, celesta, and strings.

PORGY AND BESS: A SYMPHONIC PICTURE

Composed in 1935; arranged in 1943.

Premiered on February 5, 1943 at Syria Mosque in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with Fritz Reiner conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Born in Brooklyn, New York; September 26, 1898

Died in Hollywood, California; July 11, 1937

This work was first performed by the Charlotte Symphony on March 13 & 14, 1982 with Leo Dreihuys conducting at Dana Auditorium, Queens University of Charlotte. The fifth and most recent performance set was on October 9 & 10, 2009 with Chelsea Tipton, II conducting in the Belk Theater of the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

The music of George Gershwin exemplifies the magic that occurs when the tones and rhythms of many cultures come together in a singular expression. Born in Brooklyn in 1898 to Russian Jewish parents, Gershwin (his name was first Jacob Gershowitz) grew up in a city that buzzed with the voices of the many. It had been just twelve years since the Statue of Liberty had lifted her lamp beside the golden door to welcome the huddled masses, but long before that, New York became a home to people from across the globe. "I'd like to write of the melting pot of New York City itself," Gershwin once wrote. "This would allow for many kinds of music – black and white, eastern and western – and would call for a style that should achieve out of this diversity an artistic unity."

New York's polyglot culture could be heard loud and clear in the city's entertainment district, as immigrants from abroad and migrants from down South sang, whistled, danced, and joked on vaudeville stages. As a teenager, Gershwin landed his first job on Tin Pan Alley, plugging songs that blended the schmaltz of the Yiddish theatre with ragtime's intoxicating syncopation. His career was sealed in 1924 with the Broadway show, *Lady Be Good*.

But, as lively and diverse as the popular music worlds of lower and midtown Manhattan were, it was not enough for Gershwin, who early on began to push the boundaries – both geographically and stylistically. He hung out in Harlem, soaking up the sounds of jazz (which resonate throughout his 1924 *Rhapsody in Blue*). He traveled to France to study with the great classical composer, Maurice Ravel (who, when he heard how much money Gershwin was making on Broadway, suggested that perhaps Gershwin could teach him a thing or two!). His artful synthesis of popular song, African American jazz, and French classicism produced stunning works like *An American in Paris* and *Concerto in F*.

His opera *Porgy and Bess* would expand the geographic and musical boundaries even wider. In the summer of 1934, Gershwin came down to South Carolina and spent some time at Folly Beach, near Charleston, where he learned to stomp, sing, and shout with the Gullah people. Working with a libretto based on the novel, *Porgy*, by Dubose Heyward, Gershwin began his "folk opera" in South Carolina, finishing it in New York in 1935, where it premiered on Broadway that October. The story is set in one place, Charleston's "Catfish Row." But the music merges many worlds into a unified work, the sum of Gershwin's cultural explorations.

In 1943, Fritz Reiner, then Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, commissioned Robert Russell Bennett to compose an orchestral synthesis of music from *Porgy and Bess*, including such favorites as "Summertime," "I Got Plenty of Nothin'," "Bess, You is My Woman Now," and "It Ain't Necessarily So." Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony gave the first performance of *Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture* on February 5, 1943.

The score calls for 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 2 alto saxophones, tenor saxophone, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, banjo, timpani, percussion, 2 harps, and strings.