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NEW WORLD SYMPHONY

PROGRAM II

Friday, April 16, 2021 ~ 8:00 pm
The Library of Congress Virtual Event
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NEW WORLD SYMPHONY

PROGRAM II
PROGRAM

WILLIAM WALTON (1902-1983)

Piano Quartet in D minor (1918-21, rev.1955, 1974-5)
   Allegramente
   Allegro scherzando
   Andante tranquillo
   Allegro molto

Dillon Welch, violin
Spencer Ingersoll, viola
Benjamin Fryxell, cello
Wesley Ducote, piano

FREDERICK C. TILLIS (1930-2020)

Song for Sister Hokkaido for Brass Quintet and Latin Percussion (2008)

Morgen Low & Aaron Ney, trumpet
Scott Leger, horn
Guangwei Fan, trombone
Noah Roper, bass trombone
Marcelina Suchocka, percussion

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Piano Quartet no. 2 in E-flat major, op. 87, B.162 (1889)
   Allegro con fuoco—Poco sostenuto e tranquillo
   Lento
   Allegro moderato, grazioso—Un pochettino più mosso
   Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

Yefim Romanov, violin
Jacquelyn O’Brien, viola
Chava Appiah, cello
Thomas Steigerwald, piano
About the Program

William Walton, Piano Quartet in D minor

William Walton started the Piano Quartet in D Minor in 1918 when he was only 15 years old and finished it when he was 16 and a student at Oxford University. He made minor revisions in 1921 before it was published by Stainer and Bell and first performed in 1924 by the McCullagh Quartet with pianist J.E. Wallace. He made additional revisions in 1955 and then in 1974-1975 before the second publication by Oxford University Press. The work is dedicated to the Right Reverend Thomas Banks Strong, Bishop of Ripon, who was Dean of Christ Church while Walton was a student and chorister at the Cathedral Choir School at Christ Church. Strong encouraged and mentored Walton during his undergraduate study. This quartet is a remarkable work on its own, but especially for an adolescent. Although Walton himself later minimized it as a piece of juvenilia, it is musically substantial and impressive.

Walton was an intimate friend of the Sitwell siblings Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell, who functioned as his patrons for a number of years, supporting Walton while he composed and established himself. His early works, such as Façade (1922), composed to Edith Sitwell's modernist poetry, the oratorio Belshazzar's Feast (1931), the viola concerto (1929), and his first symphony (1931) all created great interest and established him as an English composer of stature. The initial critical reception of this early piano quartet has been characterized as only polite, probably due to expectations generated by a 1922 performance of Façade, which created quite a stir in comparison to this more conservative work.

While Walton was a composition student, he spent a great deal of time studying scores by Debussy, Ravel, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky, as well as other English composers, from Elgar and Vaughan Williams to Delius and contemporary composers such as Finzi and Herbert Howells (1892-1983). Walton freely admitted that Howells' Piano Quartet in A Minor, of 1916, was the model for his own work; even so, Walton's quartet shows originality and imagination.

Constructed in four movements, the overall effect of the work is of intense expression, with a romantic undercurrent. It contains music of great inventiveness with contrasts in timbre, texture, and dynamics. The first movement, Allegretto, opens with a modal, pentatonic theme in the violin, evoking Elgar, over a cello foundation. This movement contains
musical statements that are both gentle and assertive and it ends quietly. The second movement, Allegro scherzando, is in complete contrast to the thicker texture of the first movement. Rhythmic irregularities, rapid pizzicato figures, and flashes of nimble runs in the piano part create a fleet and slightly ironic character, perhaps in a nod to Prokofiev. A fugato section is based on the principal thematic material of the first movement. The third movement, Andante tranquillo, is a fascinating mixture of complete serenity and impassioned expression. Walton's use of muted strings, pizzicato touches which quietly ornament more lyrical phrases, and violin harmonics create swaths of light and dark timbres. Occasional passages bring to mind the colorful harmonies of Debussy and Ravel; others conjure the mood of English folk songs. The fourth movement, Allegro molto, which begins with a vigorous treatment of material derived from the first movement's first theme, suggests an homage to Bartók's Allegro Barbaro. More fugal writing appears in this movement. The quartet ends with a coda which starts quietly and quickly gathers energy for a vivacious, almost jazz-inspired, forceful ending. To think of Walton's youth when he composed this quartet is to appreciate this work doubly.

Laura Yust  
Senior Cataloguing Specialist  
Library of Congress, Music Division

FREDERICK C. TILLIS, Song for Sister Hokkaido

Notes by Aaron Grad

From his start as a teenager playing saxophone and trumpet in the jazz clubs of his native Galveston, Texas, Frederick C. Tillis developed into a 20th-century Renaissance Man, composing fluidly in classical and jazz styles, touring internationally as a saxophonist, writing poetry, publishing textbooks and shaping future generations of musicians through his long tenure at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His output and innovations continued past his retirement in 1997, including the Song for Sister Hokkaido he composed in 2008 for the American Composers Alliance.

In the program that accompanied the work's premiere, kicking off the Alliance's 2009 festival at Symphony Space in New York, a note describes

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how this piece for brass quintet and percussion “combines western European harmonic and melodic vocabulary, jazz rhythmic figures and Latin American pulse and cultural nuances. A cultural mixture and brew of American, Asian, Latin and western European flavors.”

Assessing Tillis’ music anew in the wake of his death this spring, New World Symphony Dean of Chamber Music and Fellow Development Michael Linville notes, “This piece is a great example of how composers from different musical backgrounds weave their experiences into the music they create. Sister Hokkaido is composed like a jazz standard might be, in its form and in the combination of unison riffs and rhythms, and the improvisational nature of the conga writing. It also utilizes Eastern (specifically Japanese) modes in shaping its melodies.”

Tillis did not specify the source of his elusive title, but it likely stems from a long connection between his adopted home state of Massachusetts and Japan’s northernmost state of Hokkaido, which, according to the website of the Massachusetts Hokkaido Association, have been “sister states since 1990” and “friends since 1876.”

~ Aaron Grad

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK, Piano Quartet in E-flat major

Like Johannes Brahms, Antonín Dvořák had a natural affinity for writing chamber music, perhaps engendered by his experiences playing as a violist and pianist. By the time he met Brahms and dedicated his ninth string quartet to the older composer, he already had some two dozen chamber works under his belt, and upwards of 40 when he composed his second piano quartet, featured on this program. While Brahms may have helped Dvořák immensely in professional and personal terms, the Czech composer had already embarked on his own successful path.

Dvořák composed the E-flat major piano quartet swiftly in July and August of 1889, and it was first performed the following year. The first movement opens with an Allegro con fuoco presentation of a motto theme presented in three octaves (see Example 1a below). The directionality of this material, arrested suddenly on a B-flat, strongly suggests that this idea will itself be utilized cadentially at the close of the movement. In fact Dvořák does not do that, but does use it in this fashion at the first tutti instantiation of the
theme, as shown in Example 1b below:

**Example 1**

a) 

![Example 1a](image1)

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, I: mm.1-4 strings

b) 

![Example 1b](image2)

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, I: mm 26-29

There is a conceptual kinship, I think, between Dvořák's four-note motive and the one used by his mentor Brahms in that composer's op. 25 piano quartet:
Yet the implementations are different, with Dvořák taking a more emphatic approach from the beginning, gradually introducing the more harmonically adventurous implications of the idea over the course of the movement.

One of the fun things about this piano quartet is Dvořák's melding of ideas to provide transitional opportunities. For instance, he uses the dotted rhythms of the secondary material of the movement to transition into a new statement of the opening motto, which is now itself cast in a transitional role:

Offering further solidity to the musical argument is Dvořák's consistent use of the opening theme's contour as accompanimental reinforcement. Consider for instance how he accompanies the motive in diminution (compare the bracketed “x” from Example 1a presented at twice and four times the original speed):
By the end of the movement the motto has transformed, presented now in a *misterioso* guise at the *Poco sostenuto e tranquillo* coda. The combination of *tremolando* and *pizzicato* sounds are haunting atop the piano's chords:

A final push to the close brings with it the awaited integration of the two primary opening ideas, the four-note figure and the dotted-rhythm idea:
Example 6

![Example 6](image)

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, I: mm. 229-30

The writing throughout is rich and varied, and Dvořák’s multivalent use of a concise bit of material is compelling.

The second movement is an expansive *Lento* that starts in the unusual key of G-flat major and travels widely from there as several related themes are explored. The cello is featured throughout the movement as a soloist, and the strings and piano often interact in a responsorial fashion to one another. In this one movement Dvořák effortlessly moves between beautiful melodies, furious outbursts and playful passagework.

One particularly clever way that Dvořák accomplishes this through-line of consistent content despite changing circumstances is by the periodic inversion of orchestrational roles. At times we will hear the return of an idea, but with roles strikingly reversed to create a unique musical analogue. Consider two cases; the first a tranquil transformation:
Example 7

a)

The rich chords in the strings in Example 7b completely transform the feel of what is in essence the same material. And then we have a stormy swap that also transforms the sound space:
Example 8
a)

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, II: mm. 24-25

b)

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, II: mm. 66-67

The viola in the case of Example 8 is the accompanimental pivot point, linking the two variant orchestrations. These swaps occur elsewhere, and serve as a type of “development” while retaining the integrity of the basic themes of the movement; it is quite effectively accomplished.

The third movement is a quirky dance affair that cleverly links the G-flat major of the Lento to the return of E-flat major, referencing the held B-flats of the first movement before beginning the primary melody. Set in a ternary form (the first part is repeated at the end), Dvořák sets his material in a variety of guises, though in a more orchestrationally straightforward way than seen in the earlier movements. Dvořák
seems to reference a number of traditions, from general folk musics to Italianate accompaniments. The central section features another dotted-rhythm melody against triplets, further linking the music to what came before. An interesting element of Dvořák’s presentation of the material has to do with the order of the modified scales (and from a 19th-century perspective, therefore, degrees of exoticism) employed with the same basic melody; this can be seen in three different presentations of one melody in particular, given in this order:

**Example 9**

a)  

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, III: mm.21-24, piano

b)  

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, III: mm. 48-51, piano

c)  

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, III: mm.51-56, piano

The modal variety accomplishes something unusual, since in Example 9c we have, instead of a possibly expected return to the scale of Example 9a, a variant that allows Dvořák to seamlessly move to the next section. It plays with the expectation set by the initial appearance of the melody, and is in keeping with the clever touches that abound in the quartet.

Dvořák closes the quartet with a lighthearted finale that picks up on the folksy spirit of the preceding movement. While less complicated in texture and content than the first two movements in particular, the clarity
of the material and its presentation positions the final movement as a clean finisher for the piece. Dvořák includes playful details as always, such as the out-of-sync accompaniment that “corrects” itself:

Example 10

Dvořák, Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op. 87, IV: mm.23-24

Passages of great beauty are juxtaposed with rustic melodies, making the quartet a quintessential example of Dvořák’s chamber writing.

David Plylar
Senior Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division

About the Artists

The New World Symphony, America’s Orchestral Academy (NWS) prepares graduates of music programs for leadership roles in professional orchestras and ensembles. In the 33 years since its co-founding by Artistic Director Michael Tilson Thomas and Lin and Ted Arison, NWS has helped launch the careers of more than 1,150 alumni worldwide.

A laboratory for the way music is taught, presented and experienced, the NWS consists of young musicians who are granted fellowships lasting up to three years. The fellowship program offers in-depth exposure to traditional and modern repertoire, professional development training
and personalized experiences working with leading guest conductors, soloists and visiting faculty. Relationships with these artists are extended through NWS’s extensive distance learning via the internet.

NWS Fellows take advantage of the innovative performance facilities and state-of-the-art art practice and ensemble rooms of the Frank Gehry-designed New World Center, the campus of the New World Symphony and home of the Knight New Media Center.

In the hopes of joining NWS, more than 1,500 recent music school and conservatory graduates compete for about 35 available fellowships each year. The Fellows are selected for this highly competitive, prestigious opportunity based on their musical achievement and promise, as well as their passion for the future of classical music.

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Terri Lyne Carrington
*The New Standards*
Virtual Event (https://loc.gov/concerts/terri-lyne-carrington.html)
Additional video content available starting at 10am on 4/23/21

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Mahan Esfahani, harpsichord
Music by J.S. Bach, J.C.F. Fischer, Andriessen & Martinů
Virtual Event (https://loc.gov/concerts/mahan-esfahani.html)
Additional video content available starting at 10am on 4/30/21

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