SDSO



From The New World

November 21, 2026 - 7:30pm

Program

Saturday, November 21, 2026 at 7:30pm
Mary W. Sommervold Hall, Washington Pavilion

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra
Delta David Gier, *conductor*
Creekside Singers

Antonín Dvo?ák (1841 - 1904)

Symphony No. 9 in E minor
From The New World

I. Adagio - Allegro molto
II. Largo
III. Scherzo. Molto vivace
IV. Finale. Allegro con fuoco

??*Visuals by Peter Bogdanoff*

INTERMISSION

Louis Ballard (1931 - 2007)

Incident at Wounded Knee

Derek Bermel (b. 1967)
Emmanuel Black Bear

Lakota Refrains

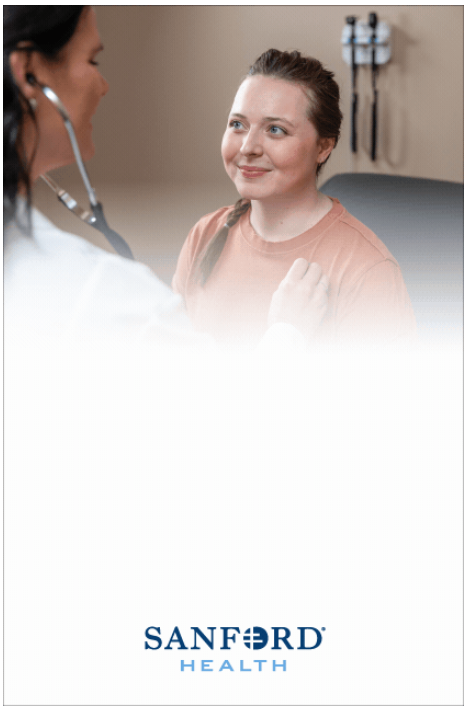
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Program Notes

Full Program Notes

Written by Scholar in Residence, Joseph Horowitz

Antonin Dvo?ák is the Alexis de Tocqueville of American classical music. De Tocqueville's nineteenth century observations of the young nation famously demonstrated how an outsider can have a clearer view. Dvo?ák arrived in New York City as an esteemed Bohemian composer who had never anticipated directing Manhattan's National Conservatory of Music. He was lured to the US by the generous salary offered by Jeannette Thurber, whose conservatory aimed to help Americans find their own musical voice. Once installed on East Seventeenth Street, Dvo?ák committed himself to investigating his new surroundings. Challenged to define what set the US apart from the Old World, he vised on three attributes: the vacant American West, which he found "sad to despair"; the legacy of enslaved Black Americans; and the fate of Native Americans threatened with extinction. This vision of the New World was both shrewd and compassionate.

Because Dvo?ák the composer was at all times susceptible to his surroundings, he was fated to compose a *New World* Symphony. He did so in 1893 - and it remains the most beloved symphonic work ever composed on American soil. The vacant American prairie is enshrined in the Largo - whose English horn melody, however, references the "Negro

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melodies" Dvorak adored. (Today most Americans who know the spiritual "Goin' Home" assume it's being quoted byDvo?ák's English horn-but Dvo?ák's tune came first, then was set to words by his onetime student William Arms Fisher.) A flute tune in the first movement closely resembles "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," one of countless spirituals sung for Dvo?ák by his African-American assistant Harry Burleigh.

But the symphony's linkage to Native America is its most fascinating "American" aspect. Dvo?ák was exposed to Native American music during his summer in Spillville, Iowa - he knew what it sounded like. His "Indian" mode, however, makes no attempt to invoke Native American song. Rather, "Indian" in Dvo?ák's music is typically connoted by a pentatonic scale, exotic accents, a drone accompaniment, and an elegiac tone. Two such tunes, in his symphony, are introduced by oboes in combination with flutes - a timbre the composer obviously associated with Native Amiercans he had heard singing. One is the haunting second subject of movement one. The other comes midway through the Largo. We know from the music historian Michael Beckerman that this plaintive Largo episode is inspired by the death of Minnehaha in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's The Song of Hiawatha (1855), once the best-known, best-loved work of American literature. In fact, the entire symphony is full of passages correlating with incidents in Longfellow's narrative poem. We should not imagine that the New World Symphony is therefore "about" Hiawatha. Rather, Beckerman's scholarship allows us to keenly observe Dvo?ák's compositional method - like many composers, he drew inspiration from people and events. In effect, we get to peek inside Dvo?ák's extraordinary musical imagination.

During my tenure as Executive Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, we celebrated the centenary of the *New World* Symphony by commissioning a "visual presentation" for the Largo and Scherzo by Peter Bogdanoff. Inspired by Beckerman's scholarship, it has since been deployed by many American orchestras - including the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra in 2016.

Returning to Dvo?ák's symphony tonight, we return to Peter's visuals, which cull major canvases by Frederic Church, Frederick Remington, and George Catlin, among other signature American painters.

The *New World* symphony was a sensation in New York. It inspired an "Indianists" movement in American music, spearheaded by the composer Arthur Farwell (the Dakota String Quartet made the world premiere recording of his Hako Quartet in Naxos). Unlike Dvo?ák, Farwell took an ethno-musicological interest in Native American song; he often cited specific tunes in an attempt to honor Native America. He spawned a movement amassing thousands of songs, choral

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and symphonic works, even operas. It petered out in the 1930s, having mainly (but no exclusively) amassed a ton of kitsch (the Indianist compositions of Dvo?ák, Farwell, and Ferruccio Busoni being noteworthy exceptions).

Then, in the 1960s, a consequential Native American concert composer materialized. This was Louis Ballard (1931 - 2007), whose parents were Cherokee and Quapaw. Incident at Wounded Knee is perhaps Ballard's best-known composition, premiered in 1974 by Dennis Russell Davies and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra on tour in Warsaw. The "incident" here remembered is the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890, the last armed conflict between Native Americans and the US Army, in which more than 200 Lakotas were needlessly slaughtered on the Pine Ridge reservation. Ballard is also responding to the 1973 occupation of the Wounded Knee site by the American Indian Movement, demanding fairer treatment. In a program note for a 1999 Carnegie Hall performance, Ballard wrote:

> *"Music history is replete with examples of composers who championed the cause of oppressed people. Composers and their music sustained the spirit of their people at a time of foreign cultural attack and domination. Dvo?ák, in 1893, predicted that America should have a form of nationalistic music built upon Indian music and black slave songs. So I felt that I was in good company when I took up my pen to express the sufferings of my people, their regeneration and hopes for a better future... it is my hope that this work will be indelibly associated with the Indian movement and ideals, but also that the worth of the work itself shall rise above all political emotions of this epoch."*

Today, both Native and non-Native composers increasingly draw upon Native American music and lore. The South Dakota Symphony Orchestra's Lakota Music Project, launched fully two decades ago by Delta David Gier, has long explored the challenging interface between Native and non-Native America. The most recent Lakota Music Project tour, last fall, premiered a couple of landmark cross-cultural compositions, by Jeffrey Paul (the orchestra's exceptional principal oboist) and a collaboration by Derek Bermel and Emmanuel Black Bear. Bermel and Black Bear's *Lakota Refrains*, originally for the Creekside Singers, string quartet, and wind quintet, is heard for the first time in a new version with full orchestra. Bermel has furnished the following program note:

> *Lakota Refrains* is a seven-movement work written in collaboration with Emmanuel Black Bear and the Creekside Singers. Listening to this group of vocalists and drummers from South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation, I was awestruck by their melodies that embodied the power and solidity of the grainte rock of the Black Hills. Born out of newly created songs using vocables - or abstract syllables -

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Lakota Refrains spins out a series of harmonic, contrapuntal, and formal variations on the structure and cadence of Oglala Lakota music. The groundbreaking ethnomusicological research and recordings made by Frances Densmore, preserved at the Simthsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology, also informed my compositional process. I am grateful to the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, their music director Delta David Gier, who helped facilitate several visits to study, transcribe, and analyze Lakota music and dance, encouraging an atmosphere of curiosity, collaboration, reflection, and mutual respect. As Emmanuel Black Bear stated at our first meeting, "This collaboration looks toward our common future."

This concert marks the culmination of more than two weeks of concerts and classroom visits at South Dakota State University, Dakota State University, Augustana University, and the University of South Dakota, and visits to Sioux Falls high schools.



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Creekside Singers

Lakota Drumming Group

Led by Keeper of the Drum, Emmanuel Black Bear, the Creekside Singers are a Lakota Drumming Group from the Pine Ridge Reservation. The Creekside Singers perform at Pow-Wows throughout the Midwestern United States.

Members include Tim Black Bear, Ari Black Bear, Brent Spoonhunter, and Hanna Gasdia.

In 2013, Emmanuel Black Bear won the Native American Music Award for "Best Pow-Wow Recording".

Media Artist

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Peter Bogdanoff

Peter Bogdanoff is a media artist, based in Los Angeles, who specializes in classical music. He was a Media Specialist at UCLA for more than 20 years. For the UCLA music historian Robert Winter, he has created more than a dozen interactive products, including DVD-ROMs and downloadable software. In collaboration with scholar in residence, Joseph Horowitz, Bogdanoff has created visual tracks for scripted concerts for more than a decade. For the South Dakota Symphony, he has furnished visual tracks for Horowitz's "Dvorak in America," "Copland in Mexico," "American Roots", "Hypnotic Dream Music" from SDSO's 23-24 season concert *Scheherazade*, and "New World Encounters" presentations. With Horowitz, as well, he created a series of six documentary films exploring the American musical experience in tandem with Horowitz's book Dvorak's Prophecy and the Vexed Fate of Black Classical Music.



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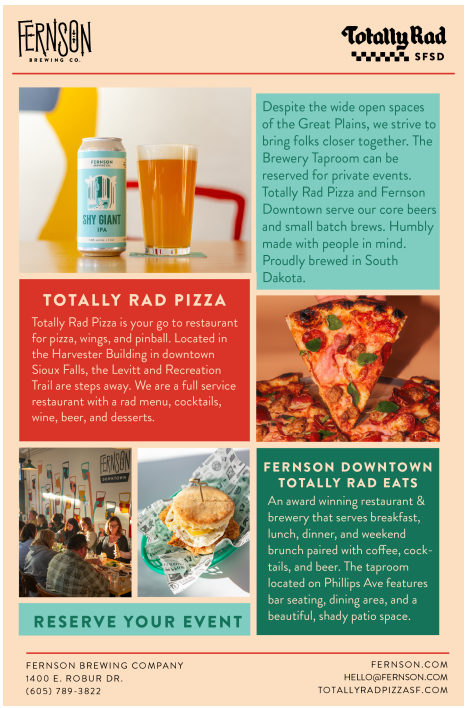


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