



## Homesick in America

### *The Nostalgia of Antonín Dvořák and Charles Ives*

Stuart Feder

Charles Ives (1874–1954) did not remember Antonín Dvořák kindly. When he dictated portions of his “autobiographical scrapbook of reminiscence” in 1932,<sup>1</sup> Ives had not composed anything of significance in nearly a decade. Although he was only fifty-eight, he was ailing and crotchety;<sup>2</sup> and there is a note of asperity in his defense of his use of American vernacular tunes in the “Adagio cantabile” (he called it his “Largo”) of his Second Symphony:

Some nice people, whenever they hear the words “Gospel Hymns” or “Stephen Foster,” say “Mercy me!” and a little high-brow smile creeps over their brow—“Can’t you get something better than that in a symphony?” The same nice people, when they go to a properly dressed symphony concert under proper auspices, led by a name with foreign hair, and hear Dvořák’s *New World Symphony*, in which they are told this famous passage was from a negro spiritual, then they think it must be quite proper, even artistic, and say “How delightful!” But when someone proves to them that the Gospel Hymns are fundamentally responsible for the negro spirituals, they say, “Ain’t it awful!”—“You don’t really mean that!”—“Why, only to think!”—“Do tell!”—I tell you, you don’t ever hear Gospel Hymns even mentioned up there to the New England Conservatory.<sup>3</sup>

Ives’s Gospel musicology aside, there is little question that at this point he disparaged Dvořák (“the name with foreign hair”) and thought of himself as not only the better composer but the rightful heir to all music American. Ives never met Dvořák. When Dvořák arrived in New York in the

fall of 1892, the eighteen-year-old Ives was attending a preparatory school in New Haven hoping to be accepted to Yale University. His compositions to date were youthful ones, largely collaborations with his father, George Edward Ives (1845–94), a village bandmaster in Danbury, Connecticut. Dvořák, on the other hand, was a Czech, a middle-aged, professional musician, a composer already at the height of his creative maturity.



In spite of Ives’s late-life hostility to Dvořák, there were many subtle connections between them. Any significant influences—the taint of which would have been vigorously disavowed—were, as with much in Ives’s life and music, arcane and unconventional. We will trace some of these here.

Perhaps the fundamental bond between the two composers was a non-verbal one, a complex of memory, loss, and nostalgia. As children, both were acutely sensitive to their auditory environments—Charles’s Danbury, Connecticut, and Dvořák’s Nelahozeves, Bohemia. In Charles’s case awareness of music dawned with his awareness of others, in particular his father who, in a sense, *was* music for the young child. The language of music was an alternative language for him that developed parallel to verbal language. The tunes George Ives played on his cornet while practicing alone at home or rehearsing the band in the back yard—a blend of European classics, Civil War marches, patriotic and parlor songs, hymns and gospel tunes—became young Charles’s own musical vocabulary. In time, they would become determinants of his musical style and be quoted in Ives’s mature musical scores. This bond is acknowledged in Charles’s words for a 1917 song, “The Things Our Fathers Loved”:

I think there must be a place in the soul all made of tunes, of the tunes of long ago. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, of the more than 140 songs Charlie would quote in his works, virtually all were the “tunes of long ago,” associated with the nineteenth century rural milieu of his father. They make up a virtual anthology of the everyday and holiday music of an American country town. Like Dvořák, Ives also composed passages intended to sound like authentic quotations. Often the tunes prevail as raw material in the forging of advanced compositional devices like dissonance, polytonality, and polyrhythm. In that duality of modern form and traditional song—not contradictory but rather mutually supporting—lies the unique achievement of Charles Ives. “I feel that, if I have done anything that is good in music,” Ives wrote, “I owe it almost entirely to [my father] and his influence.”

Antonín Dvořák, or Tonik (Tony) also grew up in a small town, Nelahozeves, where he enjoyed an active musical life. Although his father, František, worked as a butcher, he was also a “country fiddler” of sorts and gave his son his first violin lessons. Tonik, like Charlie, grew up steeped in the rich folk heritage of his region, though for him it was polkas and church music. After some uncertainty about his career, he, too, broke away from the confining rural environment and headed for the big city—Prague. Like Ives, Dvořák concentrated much of his subsequent studies on organ music and organ performance. And, despite the sophistication of his musical accomplishment and the cosmopolitan character of his world celebrity, the simplicity and naiveté of his boyhood days were never far away.

It is also significant, I think, that Ives’s advanced musical training at Yale came at the hands of a former associate of Dvořák’s, Horatio William Parker (1863–1919), the Battell Professor of Music at Yale since 1893. Parker had studied with Josef Rheinberger in Munich and had taught at the National Conservatory in New York in 1892–93 during Dvořák’s first year there. For a composition competition sponsored by Mrs. Jeannette Thurber, the Conservatory’s patron and guiding spirit, Dvořák had given him first prize in the cantata category for *The Dream King and His Love*. A gala concert was held at Madison Square Garden, and the work was favorably reviewed by the press.<sup>5</sup> Parker was duly qualified, therefore, to connect the student Ives with the rich European and largely Germanic symphonic tradition.

That Dvořák had integrated national folk idioms with musical traditions could not have escaped the student Ives, although he was fitfully seeking a different kind of integration, one that was deeply personal and not at all nationalist in intention. Later in life, Ives would have wanted to claim as his own any achievement resembling Dvořák’s precedent.



Ives had a propensity for what I have called “parallel enactments” of important events in the lives of those close to him, chiefly his father and, as I will demonstrate, Horatio Parker. The most striking example of this was the failure of creativity Ives experienced when he reached the age of forty-nine, the age at which his father died. Another instance occurred when Charlie was twenty-eight, one in which Dvořák may be seen as a silent participant-in-fantasy.

Following graduation from Yale in 1898, Ives followed his father’s example at a comparable age and moved to New York City. He took a post as church organist; later, he took his first job in the insurance industry. He con-

Charles Edward Ives studied music composition at Yale with Horatio Parker, a former colleague of Dvořák’s at the National Conservatory. Drawing by John C. Tibbetts.



Horatio Parker taught at the National Conservatory with Dvořák and later became the head of Yale University’s music department, where he numbered Charles Ives among his pupils. Drawing by John C. Tibbetts.

tinued to compose, of course, and musical evidence suggests that he was following the example of Parker in the writing of works for choir and organ. This culminated in Ives’s *The Celestial Country* (1898–1899), which was cast in the image of Parker’s *Hora Novissima* in text, music, and poetic idea. In following the trail of the respected Parker, Ives was testing his own potential for a music profession. He premiered *The Celestial Country*, I suggest, as an attempt to gain from Parker the same kind of blessing that Parker had received from Dvořák.<sup>6</sup> But the magical expectation in fantasy failed to be realized. While Dvořák had attended Parker’s performance, Parker had not

been present at Ives's. I believe this accounted for Ives's deep disappointment, subsequent depression, and eventual irrational disparagement of Dvořák.

Ives's excessive and defensive idealization of his father made it impossible for him to fully acknowledge his debt to any other master. In his *Memos* Ives thoughtfully compares his father to Parker and concludes, gratuitously, "Father was by far the greater man." In Ives's eyes his father's relative failure conjured up thoughts of "what might have been." It was intolerable to Ives, therefore, that Parker should have enjoyed a success George Ives could not achieve. The same can be said of his attitude concerning Dvořák's success.

George's gifts and training were modest compared to Parker's, let alone Dvořák's, who was four years George's senior; but Dvořák's case was a special one because Ives perceived his "Americanisms" in general as a kind of foreign invasion. Specifically, he construed Dvořák's use of the Negro spiritual, as he understood it, as nothing less than plunder. Ives associated spirituals with gospel hymns and an attendant nostalgia about boyhood days with his father. They were part of the earliest musical vocabulary that bonded father and son together. They represented their private, shared world.

In spite of himself, however, Ives was affected, stimulated, and even inspired by Dvořák's music. In Parker's classes at Yale he learned some of Dvořák's songs. Ives composed an alternate setting to the text of Adolph Heydick's "Songs My Mother Taught Me," which in German translation ("*Als die alte Mutter*") had been the basis for Dvořák's Opus 55, No. 4. Ives's realization conveys an unabashed sentimentality couched in harmonies as much related to those of the American parlor song as to any of Dvořák's.

Although it was probably written as an assignment, here may be seen the propensity for grief and that distinctive amalgamation of memory and affect we call "nostalgia" that he had in common with Dvořák, as conveyed by these lines:

Songs my mother taught me in the days long vanished,  
Seldom from her eyelids were the tear drops banished . . .  
Now I teach my children each melodious measure,  
Other tears are flowing, flowing from memory's treasure.<sup>7</sup>

Ives thought well of the song and included it in his diaristic collection, *114 Songs*, as well as in the selection of fifty songs he later reprinted. Moreover, like many of his more significant works, it persisted in his mind, somehow unfinished, and eventually appeared yet again in a chamber arrangement for clarinet (or English horn) and string quartet (1902). All the musical features of the songs remain unchanged without the benefit, or hindrance, of words. The new title, "An Old Song Deranged," may have been

expressive of the disillusionment and bitterness he was enduring at the time, contributing to his growing ambivalence toward Dvořák.

The common bond between Ives and Dvořák is most apparent in Ives's Second Symphony (1899–1902), although of an unconventional nature. It was less the nuts and bolts of the music that were critical here—the technical details through which idea and style are realized, such as the quotations of Stephen Foster songs and other popular tunes—but more the *affect*, the emotional sense such details encoded and communicated. This was of a *feeling* nature that reached deeply into the personal past and current inner lives of both men. When these strong feelings are revived, conflict elements may arise that are normally unconscious. I believe this was likely the source of both Ives's early interest in Dvořák and his later hostility.

The predominant shared affect was that of nostalgia, a yearning for an idealized past and the human and nonhuman objects associated with it. Most commonly it is experienced as a sad and bittersweet feeling associated with the persons and artifacts of home. Ives could not have known that "the famous passage . . . from a negro spiritual" in the "New World" Symphony, about which he was later so sarcastic, had emotional roots in the makeup of its composer that strikingly corresponded to his own. Each composer suffered from his own form of homesickness and family disruption and loss.

Money, wanderlust, and a taste for fame were not the only factors that led Dvořák to accept Jeannette M. Thurber's invitation to come to America as director of the National Conservatory. Unconscious motivations inevitably played a part in the decision; perhaps Dvořák's turning fifty in September 1891 contributed. As composer and teacher he had already accomplished more than could be reasonably expected in a highly successful and acclaimed career. If Horatio Parker was the exemplary American composer of his time, what can one say of Dvořák? His fiftieth birthday was attended by the reception of an honorary degree of Doctor of Music from Cambridge University. Yet in the composition of his Requiem in 1890—which appears to be unrelated to commissions at the time—he was perhaps addressing emergent existential issues concerning his own life. Indeed the Requiem's first performance was given a month after his fiftieth birthday. Thus, the prospect of a new life in a new world may have carried a strong appeal to a man increasingly aware of his own mortality.

However, the gratification of such desires and fantasies did not come without a price. The American trip temporarily broke up the family. When he arrived with his wife and two of the children, he left behind the other four children, many friends, and an elderly father. František's death in Bohemia

came in March 1894, just a few months before the death of Ives's father. Thus, despite gratifying work during the first year, Dvořák was moody and subject to episodes of intensely felt nostalgia.

It was in this emotional atmosphere that Dvořák began work on the "New World" Symphony. Indeed, a degree of energy must have come from the anticipated reunion of the family in Spillville in the summer of 1893. (See John C. Tibbetts's essay, Chapter 7.) The Symphony's Largo, in particular, is redolent with those yearning feelings. I believe it had a stylistic influence, albeit an unconventional one, on Ives.

Ives's initial encounter with Dvořák's Largo must have produced a shock of recognition within himself. It served, perhaps, as stimulant and official "permission" to incorporate literal vernacular material associated with affect and memory into a symphonic setting. This reaction was rooted, as we have seen, in the complex relationship with his father—particularly in a longing for an earlier, preconflictual period of boyhood and a reverence for their shared past.

To be sure, while Ives worked on his Second Symphony, he was not self-consciously writing a "national" music. This style was in *statu nascendi* during its composition from 1896 to 1902. Rather, his Adagio Cantabile, said to have stemmed from an earlier organ prelude,<sup>8</sup> may have been the result of Dvořák's occult influence in the respects considered above. At one point during the composition of the work, in perhaps an unconscious reference to Dvořák's Largo, Ives referred to his Adagio Cantabile movement as a "Largo" and quoted the tune "America" boldly and with strong sentiment in the earliest climax and final statement of its theme.<sup>9</sup> Here, the intensity of feeling relates not only to America as a fatherland but, quite literally, to Ives's father. It is part of a persistent train of musical thought harking back to one of the earliest and most successful musical collaborations of father and son in the *Variations on "America,"* written when Ives was about seventeen years old. It is also worth noting that Dvořák himself considered writing a setting of the "America" tune during his visit (see Jarmil Burghauer's essay, Chapter 14).

Elsewhere in the Second Symphony we find another example of what appears to be an imitation, or emulation, of Dvořák's Largo. In the otherwise athletic and vivid fifth movement is a cantabile passage for solo horn that seems to me the counterpart of the theme that has come to be popularly known as "Goin' Home."<sup>10</sup> Dvořák's melody is written in D-flat major, Ives's in A-flat major; Dvořák's is written for English horn, Ives's for French horn. Ives's pentatonic melody seems related to Dvořák's. Further, the accompanying figures in the violins are reminiscent of other motifs in the "New World"

Symphony. Beyond this, there is a commonly felt thread, or underlying feeling of nostalgia. (As an old man, long after he stopped attending concerts, Ives once remarked that he would listen to a concert performance of the Second Symphony only because it reminded him so vividly of the old days with his father in Danbury.) A flute obbligato soon joins the horn solo and carries the tune of T. H. Bayly's "Long, Long Ago." Its unsung words serve as a gloss on the human condition experienced by both Ives and Dvořák:

Tell me the tales that to me were so dear,  
Long, long ago, long, long ago;  
Sing me the song I delighted to hear,  
Long, long ago, long, long ago.  
Now you are come, all my grief is removed,  
Let me forget that so long you have rovd;  
Let me believe that you love as you lov'd,  
Long, long ago, long ago.<sup>11</sup>



A musical influence may be transmitted not only in technical terms but through the underlying human context that informs music. It is precisely this fundamental humanism that makes music such a universal phenomenon. It is therefore curious that Ives, steeped in his own personalized version of transcendentalism, failed to include Dvořák in its all-encompassing embrace. Rather, he viewed him as a rival and musical carpetbagger. But the aging Ives of the *Memos* was no longer the younger man of the Second Symphony, poised between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A growing suspiciousness and xenophobia conjured up for Ives a hostile image of "the name with foreign hair." He was no doubt thinking quite literally at this point of the un-American accents in the orthography of *Antonín Dvořák*.

The truth is that both men expressed in their music a profound nostalgia and yearning for family, homeland, and an idealized past. The words to an Ives song express it best: "I know not what are the words, but they sing in my soul of the things our Fathers loved."

Both men were homesick in America.

## NOTES

1. Charles Ives, *Memos*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 52.
2. For a discussion of the context of the autobiographical *Memos*, as well as of Ives's mental state at the time, see my *Charles Ives: "My Father's Song"* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), Chapter 22. My other writ-

ings on Ives include "The Nostalgia of Charles Ives: An Essay in Affects and Music," *The Annual of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 10 (June 1981), 301–332, and "Charles and George Ives: The Veneration of Boyhood," in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Music* (Madison CT: International Universities Press, 1989), 115–176.

3. In these writings I wanted to examine the mental life of the artist. They constitute a "psychoanalytic biography" because I tried to apply the biographical approach to the methods of clinical psychoanalysis. Both methods share certain features. Initially there is much history-taking and data-gathering; and later, formulations and interpretations suggest themselves as lines of meaning coalesce. In the case of Ives (and here, by extension, of Dvořák), the sheer auditory aspects of their upbringing were also profoundly important. Ives and Dvořák afford a fascinating opportunity for the biographer to examine how auditory representation affects life and art.

4. Charles Ives, *Memos*, 135.
5. Charles Ives, *114 Songs*, No. 43.
6. William Kay Kearns, *Horatio Parker*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1965. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
7. Stuart Feder, *Charles Ives: "My Father's Song,"* Chapter Two.
8. In Ives's case two other extremes might be noted—a tendency toward deep depression as well as optimistic elation. This perhaps is manifest in Ives's setting in which the second strophe—unlike Dvořák's version—is carried in an upwardly moving figure in the major key.
9. John Kirkpatrick, *A Temporary Mimeographed Catalogue of the Music Manuscripts of Charles Edward Ives*, 1955, 5; in the Library of the Yale Music School.
10. Charles Ives, *Symphony No. 2, Full Score*, New York: Southern Music Publishing, 1951. See III at measures 15 and 127.
11. Charles Ives, *Symphony No. 2, V* at measure 58. This theme is foreshadowed in I at measure 33.
12. T. H. Bayly, "Long, Long Ago," in *The Ideal Home Music Library*, vol. 10 (New York: Scribner's, 1913), 159.





## *The F-Major String Quartet* *Opus 96*

*Alan Houtchens*

It was as if Dvořák's mind had unconsciously been working on a new composition while he was otherwise occupied with the trip to Spillville in early June 1893. He and his family had come by train from New York City to the Midwestern town; and no sooner had they settled into their summer home than, within the short span of just three days, 8–10 June, he composed one of his most popular—and, coincidentally, one of his very best—works. At the end of the sketch for the String Quartet in F Major, Opus 96, he wrote: "Thanks to the Lord God. I am satisfied, it went quickly." After "try-outs" with the Kovařík family in Spillville, the scoring was completed on 23 June. It was given its first public performance by the Kneisel Quartet (Franz Kneisel, Otto Roth, Louis Svecěnski, and Alwin Schroeder) in Boston on New Year's Day 1894 and in New York on 12 January.

For the last eight months Dvořák had been living and teaching in New York; now, reunited with the whole family and away from the city's bustle, Conservatory duties, and the intrusive newspaper reporters, he greeted the freedom of country life with a flood of musical inspiration. The first movement of the work, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is cast in sonata form. Otakar Šourek suggests that there is a "smiling contentment of a bucolic existence" in its rustling tremolos, pizzicato touches, and airy principal theme.<sup>1</sup> The second movement, *Lento*, is a kind of arietta that presents a series of closely interrelated couplets within the broad scheme of AA BB CC A' Coda. Jarmil Burghauser finds here a "melancholy grandeur of the broad

plains";<sup>2</sup> there is certainly a heartfelt intensity in the repetitions of the mournful melody against ceaseless, almost monotonous accompanying figures. The third movement, *Molto vivace*, is a scherzo with two trios, wherein the second trio is a variant of the first and both employ an augmented version of the scherzo theme. The association between the subsidiary idea in the high registers of the violins and the song of the scarlet tanager, a bird indigenous to the Iowa plains, is famous, even notorious. The last movement, *Vivace ma non troppo*, is a sonata-rondo. It is exceptionally vivacious and is animated by a skipping rhythm that pervades almost the entire movement. Clapham suggests that its choralelike central episode evokes the image of Dvořák improvising for mass on the little organ of the St. Wenceslaus Church at Spillville.<sup>3</sup>

As accessible and charming as this work is—making it by far the most popular of Dvořák's fourteen quartets—it is remarkable also in its unity of construction and its forward-looking manner of thematic treatment. The four movements are unified through a variety of means. For example, the first, second, and fourth movements begin in the same manner, with three instrumentalists playing music that is accompanimental in character (Examples 16-1a, 16-1b, and 16-1c).

The movements are also unified through key relationships. The first, third, and fourth movements begin and end in the home key of F major. The relative minor key, D minor (requiring the same key signature as F major), makes itself felt already by the thirteenth measure of the work and, along with its parallel key, D major, also serves as a complement to the principal key of F (major and minor) in the second movement, whose tonal center is, in fact, D. The importance placed throughout the entire quartet on mediant and submediant relationships (at the distance of a third above and below a given tonic) is made clear even melodically in the exposition of the first movement: the pitch D is stressed in the first theme (see Example 16-1a, m. 3) and the pitch F-sharp plays a prominent role in the closing theme, which is in the key of A major, the mediant of F major (Example 16-2, mm. 45 and 47). In addition, the key of the lowered submediant, D-flat minor/major, sometimes spelled enharmonically as C-sharp minor/major, figures prominently in the outer movements.<sup>4</sup>

All the movements are unified thematically as well. A figure consisting of the interval of a second followed by a third in the same direction, marked with an × in Example 16-1, reappears throughout the Quartet as a kind of leitmotif. A few of the many instances are shown in Examples 16-2 through 16-5. The triplet figure that makes its first appearance near the end of the exposition section of the first movement plays a structurally important role

Allegro, ma non troppo  $\text{♩} = 112$

Violino I. *pp*

Violino II. *pp*

Viola *mf*

Violoncello *pp*

Example 16-1a. Dvořák, F Major String Quartet, Opus 96, first movement, mm. 1–6.

Lento  $\text{♩} = 112$

*mp molto espressivo*

*pizz.*

Example 16-1b. Dvořák, F Major String Quartet, Opus 96, second movement, mm. 1–6.

Vivace, ma non troppo  $\text{♩} = 152$

*fp*

*pizz.*

Example 16-1c. Dvořák, F Major String Quartet, Opus 96, fourth movement, mm. 1–8.

in tempo

*ppp*

*fz*

Example 16-2. Dvořák, F Major String Quartet, Opus 96, first movement, mm 44–47.

in the development section. Subsequently this figure animates the second trio of the third movement and, more significantly, the last half of the finale, beginning in measures 193–198 where, it should also be noted, transformations of material drawn from the first and third movements are presented.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the beginning of this second episode within the sonata-rondo structure of the last movement, with its choralelike presentation in imitative counterpoint, recalls portions of the development section in the first movement.<sup>6</sup> As tempting as it is to follow the cue of Šourek and Clapham and imagine this as an evocation of Dvořák at the St. Wenceslaus organ,<sup>7</sup> it seems more likely that this section reflects Dvořák's appreciation of similar contrapuntal passages written in a pseudo-Palestrina style found in Beethoven's last quartets.

Dvořák's aesthetic intentions with regard to the "American" Quartet have largely been misunderstood by writers who persist in ascribing to the music, for a variety of poorly articulated reasons, a certain "simplicity" (in contrast to "complexity," especially as represented by the music of Wagner), "primitivism" (presumably in contradistinction to urbanity), and "clarity" (as opposed to "confusion").<sup>8</sup> A statement made by Dvořák himself seems to support this view:

Since I wrote that quartet in 1893 in the Czech community of Spillville (1200 miles distant from New York), I wanted for once to write something very melodious and simple, and I always kept Papa Haydn before my eyes; for that reason it turned out so simple.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, while the formal structures of the movements, the sequence in which they follow each other, and the harmonic relationships are not particularly adventuresome, in other, more significant respects this may be the most radical, forward-looking composition Dvořák ever wrote. As a piece of chamber

music, it anticipates future trends to a degree beyond any contemporary work, save, perhaps, Debussy's String Quartet (1893). By considering four specific features of Dvořák's score—(1) the rarefied, concise nature of the melodic material and the corollary extreme compactness of form; (2) the highly sophisticated, complex manner in which thematic material and rhythmic motifs are treated; (3) the integration ad libitum, within a single melodic line or harmonic progression, of notes and chords belonging to both major and parallel minor keys, producing what, for lack of a better term, might be called integral bimodality; and (4) the intermittent stratification of individual components resulting in multilayered textures—one can arrive at no other conclusion.

One of the most striking examples involving the multilayering of textural components may be seen in Example 16-3, where four different rhythmic strata are operating simultaneously, and a fully formed melody in the cello line is complemented in the first violin part by motifs drawn from measures 11–14 of the exposition (the beginning of the transition section leading to the second key area).

Example 16-3. Dvořák, F Major String Quartet, Opus 96, first movement, mm. 123–127.

It was Josef Jan Kovařík who suggested that the tune which first appears in measures 21–28 of the scherzo was inspired by the song of a bird Dvořák had heard while walking in the countryside near Spillville<sup>10</sup> (see John C. Tibbetts's article on Spillville, Chapter 7); nevertheless, it would be folly to proclaim that this movement is, ipso facto, "primitive" or "mystical," thus using terms that are applied, with much more authority, to the music of Messiaen, for instance.<sup>11</sup> It would be more appropriate to presume that Dvořák included this bird call as part of a conscious effort to suffuse the Quartet with a pastoral mode, which for him, as for Haydn, must have connoted simplicity in the sense of rusticity. After all, Dvořák incorporated into the musical discourse of the "American" Quartet several other gestures and stylistic features traditionally associated with the pastorate, including bag-pipelike drones and extended pedal points, the key of F major, and melodies that are predominately diatonic, triadic, and pentatonic.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, there is nothing simple, primitive, or clear about the manner in which Dvořák's discourse proceeds; in the first movement, for example, consider how he derives—or to put it differently, *arrives at*—the cello melody in the recapitulation (Examples 16-3 and 16-4b) from the closing theme of the exposition (Examples 16-2 and 16-4a). (The cello tune in Example 16-4b has been transposed from D-flat major to the same key as Example 16-4a to illustrate their relationship more clearly.)

Example 16-4a. Dvořák, F Major String Quartet, Opus 96, first movement, mm. 44–47.

Example 16-4b. Dvořák, F Major String Quartet, Opus 96, first movement, mm. 123–127 (transposed).

By variation I mean a way of altering something given, so as to develop further its component parts as well as the figures built from them, the outcome always being something new, with an apparently low degree of resemblance to its prototype, so that one finds difficulty in identifying the prototypes within the variation.<sup>13</sup>



Although these are not the words of Antonín Dvořák, they are certainly apropos to the example just cited and to many others that could have been cited—to the whole of the second movement, for that matter. They are the words of Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), who was attempting to describe a process that he considered fundamental to his own compositional style and for which he coined the term “developing variation.” Schoenberg felt that this process offered twentieth-century composers a fruitful alternative to the “model and sequence” method of melodic construction found in the music of Wagner who,

in order to make his themes suitable for memorability, had to use sequences and semi-sequences, that is, unvaried or slightly varied repetitions differing in nothing essential from first appearances, except that they are exactly transposed to other degrees. . . . The damage of this inferior method of construction to the art of composing was considerable. With very few exceptions, all followers and even opponents of Wagner became addicts of this more primitive technique.<sup>14</sup>

In light of the manner, discussed earlier, in which some authors have described the music of Dvořák’s “American” Quartet, it is all the more paradoxical that Schoenberg should have used the word “primitive” when describing this or any aspect of Wagner’s music. Whenever he wrote about the process of developing variation and other stylistic tendencies in art music that he considered progressive, Schoenberg frequently cited examples from the works of Johannes Brahms; indeed, one of his most important essays, written in 1947, is entitled “Brahms the Progressive.”<sup>15</sup> He never mentioned Dvořák’s compositions in the same vein—not even the “American” Quartet, which obviously had a profound influence on him as he was composing his own String Quartet in D major (1897).<sup>16</sup>

Schoenberg did once acknowledge that he had composed this early work under the influence of Dvořák (as well as Brahms), but unfortunately he did not mention precisely what in Dvořák’s music he found attractive.<sup>17</sup> We can only speculate that he was most impressed with the way Dvořák managed to produce vital offshoots from a minimal amount of melodic material and to condense his rhetorical arguments into the slightest amount of space (time). The Quartet in F major is by far the shortest of Dvořák’s chamber works, and it is the most epigrammatic and aphoristic of all his compositions; as such, it presages techniques developed by many twentieth-century composers.

In describing his own development as a composer, Schoenberg notes that very early on he was driven by a compulsion to restrict both the content and form of his works. Only gradually did he become aware that restriction

could be achieved through condensation and juxtaposition. He learned two important things: “first, to formulate ideas in an aphoristic manner, which does not require continuations out of formal reasons; secondly, to link ideas together without the use of formal connectives, merely by juxtaposition.”<sup>18</sup> He may very well have been influenced along these lines by the integral bimodality found throughout the score of the “American” Quartet or by such sudden, unprepared juxtapositions of tonalities as occur in the last movement: F major to A-flat major at measure 69 (Example 16-5) and F major to D-flat major at measure 252. He likewise may have been struck by the manner in which Dvořák often juxtaposes different melodic ideas, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes one right after another.

Example 16-5. Dvořák, F Major String Quartet, Opus 96, fourth movement, mm. 69–75.

Šourek astutely gauged that the “American” Quartet “holds an important place in Dvořák’s chamber music as a new and original work,” though precisely what he meant by “new” is not certain; and he did not need to restrict his purview solely to the genre of chamber music.<sup>19</sup> While the work reveals new tendencies in the sense that these tendencies are progressive and forward-looking, it would not be correct to suggest that they show up for the first time in this composition to the exclusion of earlier works by Dvořák or other composers.

Twenty years earlier, Dvořák had already begun to experiment along similar lines. To cite just one example, his Piano Trio in B-flat major, Opus 21 (1875), has many stylistic features in common with the “American” Quartet: concision of formal design, pentatonic melodies, emphasis on sub-mediante relationships, modal inflections, the process of developing variation, extreme rhythmic vitality, textural stratification. Like the Quartet, it even opens with two measures of accompanimental figuration. At this stage of his musical development, Dvořák’s interest in dramatic music, which he maintained throughout his life, and his close personal and artistic association with

Leoš Janáček, provided important stimuli in his search for a "new" epigrammatic approach.<sup>20</sup>

Concurrently, Brahms was pursuing many of the same artistic goals, most notably in his First Symphony. The path he subsequently followed in refining the process of developing variation and honing an aphoristic compositional style runs nearly parallel to Dvořák's. In his F Minor Clarinet Sonata, Opus 120, No. 1 (1894), Brahms managed to create a work that, like the "American" Quartet completed one year earlier, marks the height of achievement. The two compositions are emblazoned on opposite sides of the same coin. It is a mystery why Schoenberg did not acknowledge the progressive nature of Dvořák's music alongside that of Brahms.

### NOTES

1. Otakar Šourek, *The Chamber Music of Antonín Dvořák*, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsour (Prague: Artia, [1956]), 98.
2. Jarmil Burghauser, "Antonín Dvořák: The String Quartets," liner notes to the Deutsche Grammophon recordings of the complete Dvořák String Quartets, DGG 429193-2.
3. John Clapham, *Antonín Dvořák: Musician and Craftsman* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 181.
4. Compare mm. 68–77 and 123–135 in the first movement with mm. 155–169 and 252–262 in the finale.
5. In the first movement, triplet figures may be found in mm. 56–57, 74–75, and serving to articulate the beginning of the retransition, mm. 106–108.
6. Compare mm. 155–171 in the fourth movement with mm. 92–94 and 96–106 in the first movement.
7. Otakar Šourek, *Život a dílo Antonína Dvořáka 3* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1956), 161. See also John Clapham, *Antonín Dvořák: Musician and Craftsman*, 181.
8. See, for example, David Beveridge, "Sophisticated Primitivism: The Significance of Pentatonicism in Dvořák's American Quartet," *Current Musicology* 24 (1977), 25–36, and Beveridge's "Romantic Ideas in a Classical Frame: The Sonata Forms of Dvořák," Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Berkeley, 1980); see also John Clapham, *Dvořák* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 123.
9. Letter from Dvořák to Josef Bohuslav Foerster, 11 March 1895, in *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a dokumenty*, ed. Milan Kuna et al. (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1989), 386. The translation is my own.
10. Josef Jan Kovařík, *Reminiscences*, quoted in Otakar Šourek's *The Chamber Music of Antonín Dvořák*, 102.

11. This is not to minimize Dvořák's sincere love of nature and her creatures, especially birds. He was an avid bird-watcher, and he raised pigeons as a hobby. It is worth noting in the present context that the informal list of the items in Dvořák's estate prepared by Josef Bachtík sometime during the 1940s and the more formal list prepared later by officials of the Museum Antonína Dvořáka in Prague indicate that he owned a copy of Simeon Pease Cheney's bird-watching guidebook *Wood Notes Wild* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1892). He must have obtained it during his sojourn in America. Unfortunately, none of the birdcalls notated by Cheney resemble the birdcall written out by Kovařík or the tune as it appears in the third movement of the String Quartet in F major. (For a different conclusion, see John C. Tibbetts's article on Spillville, Chapter 7.) John Clapham, in his *Antonín Dvořák: Musician and Craftsman* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 181, maintains that the call is that of the scarlet tanager, but this has yet to be convincingly demonstrated.
12. The fact that many of the melodic ideas are pentatonic does not necessarily make them primitive; nor does it necessarily imply that Dvořák was consciously trying to capture the spirit of the American and/or Bohemian geographical or cultural landscape, as many writers have suggested. Richard Graves, for instance, once playfully quipped during a BBC broadcast that listening to the Quartet in F major is "like eating Blueberry Pie and washing it down with Slivovic." (Americans know that he meant apple, instead of blueberry, pie.) Quoted in Hans-Hubert Schonzeler's *Dvořák* (London: Marion Boyars, 1984), 157.
13. Arnold Schoenberg, "New Music: My Music" (ca. 1930), in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 102–103.
14. Arnold Schoenberg, "Criteria for the Evaluation of Music" (1946), in *Style and Idea*, 129. See also "My Evolution" (1949), in *Style and Idea*, 80.
15. Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 398–441.
16. See Reinhard Gerlach, "Dvořákův vliv na mladého Schoenberga: Poznámky k Schoenbergovu smyčcovému kvartetu D dur," *Hudební rozhledy* 25, No. 2 (February 1972), 84–88; and "War Schoenberg von Dvořák beeinflusst? Zu Arnold Schoenbergs Streichquartett D-dur," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 133 (March 1972), 122–127.
17. Arnold Schoenberg, program notes written in 1936 and 1937 for recordings of his five published string quartets, reprinted in *Schoenberg, Berg, Webern: The String Quartets, A Documentary Study*, ed. Ursula von Rauchhaupt. (Hamburg: Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft, 1971, 1987), 32–33.
18. Arnold Schoenberg, "A Self-Analysis" (1948), in *Style and Idea*, 78.
19. Otakar Šourek, *The Chamber Music of Antonín Dvořák*, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsour (Prague: Artia, [1956]), 97.
20. After completing the Piano Trio in B-flat, Dvořák next composed the Serenade for Strings in E major, Opus 22, the Piano Quartet in D major, Opus 33, and the Symphony No. 5 in F major, Opus 76, then spent the rest of the year working on *Vanda*, the fifth of his eleven completed operas.



## *E-flat Major String Quintet* *Opus 97*

*Jan Smaczny*

The package of works that Antonín Dvořák offered his publisher Simrock after the summer of 1893 must have been among the most profitable ever acquired by the German publisher. Not only did Dvořák promise the “New World” Symphony and the Quartet, Opus 96, but he also announced that he was at work on a string quintet with two violas. Simrock accepted them all.

Relations between composer and publisher had been difficult in recent years. Simrock favored small-scale works that would sell well, while Dvořák’s inclination was to write symphonies, operas, and other large works. “You counsel me that I should write small works,” wrote Dvořák in October 1890, “but this is very difficult. . . . [A]t the moment my head is full of large ideas and I will do as the dear Lord wishes. That will certainly be for the best.”<sup>1</sup> Dvořák did not write his publisher again until November 1891, when he promised some new works—a promise that didn’t materialize until after the Spillville summer in 1893.

Spillville had undoubtedly stimulated some of his finest music. Dvořák had often been ill at ease working in New York without the chance of escaping to the countryside, as he often did at home in Bohemia. Now, with the family together again and time to walk, visit with friends, and compose in these broad open spaces, new works poured out of him. Although the E-flat Quintet took longer to compose than the Quartet, which had been completed within two weeks (see Alan Houtchens’s essay, Chapter 16), it

also went quickly and easily. He began it on 26 June (three days after completing the Quartet) and completed it on 1 August 1893.<sup>2</sup>

Šourek suggests that, whereas the Quartet portrays an “intimate spiritual experience,” the Quintet reflects “the outward impressions made on the composer by the spirit of the new environment and by some of its very original characters, whose acquaintance the artist made on his frequent excursions into the surrounding forests and prairies.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, its exotic, occasionally rather florid harmonic plumage, drumbeat rhythms, and superb tactile qualities (ample use of tremolos, plucked strings, pizzicato passages, and tapping sounds) may evoke in the sympathetic listener a collage of Spillville’s cricket-haunted twilights and blazing noonday suns. These are the sights and sounds the poet Milton described in “L’Allegro”:

Such sights as youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream.

Some commentators prefer the Quintet to its more popular elder brother. Thomas Dunhill, for example, deplors its relative neglect: “It is an equally dextrous piece of writing, and is, in some ways, more satisfying, more concentrated, and, in places, more charged with sentiment.”<sup>4</sup> It was premiered by the Kneisel Quartet (assisted by violist M. Zach) on 12 January 1894 in Carnegie Hall, eleven days after the premiere of the Quartet.

For many reasons, the epithet “American” can as easily be applied to the Quintet as to the Quartet. All the features associated with Dvořák’s “American” style are felt as strongly in this work as in the “New World” Symphony, the Sonatina, and the piano Suite. Of course, the pentatonic melodies and motifs associated with this style exist in abundance in earlier works as well. For example, the pentatonic tendency—the casting of melodies which in the major mode avoid the fourth and seventh tones and in the minor mode use the diminished seventh—was present in the end of the A Major Piano Quintet, Opus 81. Indeed, one can look back to some of Dvořák’s earliest works, such as the song cycle *Cypresses* (1865), and to works from his strongly experimental period in the late 1860s and early 1870s, including the Prelude to Act III of the first version of *King and Collier* (*Král a uhlíř*), and from the middle period that extended into the early 1890s. But there can be little doubt that his interest in pentatonic inflections was at its strongest in America.

Another influence can be seen in the Quintet. During Dvořák’s stay in Spillville, a group of Native Americans visited the town. While their main purpose was to sell medicinal herbs (see John C. Tibbetts’s essay on the

Spillville summer, Chapter 7), they were also able to perform tribal songs and dances for Dvořák at the local inn. Jan Kovařík took down some of the melodies they sang (see Example 17-1), and the pentatonic outlines bear a close resemblance to the second subject of the Quintet's first movement (Example 17-2).



Example 17-1. A Native American melody heard in Spillville and notated by Jan Kovařík.



Example 17-2. Dvořák, E-flat Major String Quintet, Opus 97 first movement, second subject.

Dvořák seems to have dotted the eighth notes and altered the pointing to create a more fruitful compositional building block. The Quintet is strongly marked by a characteristic drum rhythm; it appears in all the movements except the *Larghetto*. To be sure, there has been a lot of debate about the extent to which Dvořák may have been influenced by these aural vernacular elements: Šourek claims that the Native Americans' music in Spillville did indeed affect Dvořák,<sup>5</sup> whereas Clapham rejects the supposition, or at least strongly qualifies it (see Clapham's essay, "Dvořák and the American Indian," Chapter 8). At the very least, as if intending to show pupils and future composers the way in which indigenous material might be used, Dvořák took the raw material offered by the Native Americans and created a plastic developmental unit suitable for use in a sophisticated modern genre. Dvořák was no musical snob, and he responded wholeheartedly to the popular national music of America—the songs of Stephen Foster, Native American chants and rhythms, and the black spirituals and plantation melodies. These traits would persist in the symphonic poems and operas written after his return to the Old World.

In addition to the twelve string quartets he had written up to that time and the Sextet in A-flat major, Opus 48, Dvořák had also composed

two string quintets. The first was an apprentice work, Opus 1, written in 1861 and built on the body of work by older contemporaries like Vaclav Jindrich Veit, whose many quintets were current in Prague at the time. Dvořák turned again to the form in 1875 with the Quintet for String Quartet and Double Bass, Opus 77; his choice of two violas, instead of the two cellos used by Schubert and others, looks back to his first effort.



The opening viola solo of the E-flat Major Quintet consists of a pentatonic fragment that foreshadows the main theme of the *Allegro non tanto*. It sets in motion the kind of "in tempo" introduction Dvořák had cultivated so successfully in the finale of the Seventh Symphony and the first movement of the Eighth. There is also a novel harmonic piquancy throughout this first movement that is in part effected by some ear-catching false relations in the harmony a few measures after the beginning. Dvořák's concentration on melodic and rhythmic features in this work may account for the relative structural simplicity in three of its four movements. Once under way, the *Allegro non tanto* bounds along with enormous assurance: an uncomplicated transition, energized by excited dotted rhythms, not only leads to but anticipates the exotically colored second theme already mentioned. The working out of themes in the movement's development combines vigorous imitation in the latter stages with meltingly beautiful lyricism based on the first theme. The movement comes full circle in its final measures with reminiscences of the melodic fragments and the "bluesy" harmony of the opening. The close is exquisitely gentle.

In this first movement and the succeeding *Allegro vivo* (a rare example of the Scherzo movement in common time), Dvořák couples his lyrical imagination with a fine contrapuntal instinct. The result in the second movement is a strong sense of unity between the soulful theme of the first viola in the central section, *Un poco meno mosso*, and the delicately arching countermelody of the second violin heard after the opening. For all its open-hearted qualities, the bustling vigor of the *Allegro vivo* conceals much care in the construction. A catchy, rhythmic ostinato underpins the simple pentatonic melody; in turn, these elements provide a background for both the sweeping melody in the violins and the exhilarating "hoedown" that eventually bursts upon the ear.

Like the F Major Quartet, the emotional heart of the Quintet is found in the slow movement. The *Larghetto* is an eloquent set of variations on a noble and expansive theme, the opening of which bears a family resem-

blance to the slow introduction to the "New World" Symphony. In fact, the melody can claim to be Dvořák's "American" signature since it was one of the first themes he sketched in the New World, on 19 December 1892. Dvořák also considered using the second part of the theme, a hymnlike melody in the major key, as an alternative melody for a setting of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" (see Jarmil Burghauser's essay, Chapter 14). Throughout this remarkable movement Dvořák makes full use of the textural possibilities of the ensemble, producing some wonderful instrumental effects to complement his imaginative transformations of the theme. The end result is a movement of near-vocal quality, which the composer at one point considered as the basis for a larger work for voices and orchestra. A simple statement of the second part of the theme concludes the movement.

The Allegro giusto finale returns to the clear outlines of the preceding movements with its simple presentation of themes along a rondo plan. The opening melody has the dotted rhythms and infectiousness of the famous *Humoresque* No. 7. It also resists heavy-going development and leads with little elaboration to a second theme, which for all its apparent "Indian" qualities, can trace its ancestry back to the Rondo of Schubert's E-flat Major Piano Trio and the Finale of Smetana's G Minor Piano Trio. Whatever its pedigree, this passage, with its strangely spectral opening, makes for an interestingly exotic interlude during a stream of more familiar, though nonetheless entertaining, melodies. The Quintet ends in high spirits with a whirring string figure that looks forward to the magnificent conclusion of the B Minor Cello Concerto.

#### NOTES

1. See Milan Kuna, ed., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a dokumenty 3, 1890–1895* (Prague: Supraphon, 1989), 52–53.
2. See Milan Kuna, ed., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a dokumenty*, 103.
3. Otakar Šourek, *The Chamber Music of Antonín Dvořák*, transl. Roberta Finlayson Samsour (Prague: Artia, 1956), 37–38.
4. See Thomas Dunhill, "The Chamber Music," in *Antonín Dvořák: His Achievement*, ed. Viktor Fischl. (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1942), 123.
5. Otakar Šourek, *Život a dílo Antonína Dvořáka* (The Life and Works of Antonín Dvořák), vol. 3, 165–166.
6. Otakar Šourek, *The Chamber Music of Antonín Dvořák*, 38.

#### CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



## *The Stephen Foster–Antonín Dvořák Connection*

Deane L. Root

On Tuesday, 23 January 1894, during the fifth week of its clothing fund drive, the New York *Herald* printed an appeal for contributions:

HEAR THE "OLD  
FOLKS AT HOME."

It Will Be Rendered to-Night  
for Charity as It Has  
Never Been Before.

DVOŘÁK'S OWN ARRANGEMENT.

It Will Be Sung Entirely by Negroes, of  
Whom Mme. Jones, the "Black  
Patti," Is Soloist.

AID FOR THE CLOTHING FUND.

Donations Are Still Coming in, but  
There Is Still a Great Need  
of Women's Wear.

The article named several patronesses of the National Conservatory of Music who promoted this charity by selling concert tickets. "Here is, indeed, a treat for all lovers of music, as well as for those who take interest in the development of our national schools of music and in the negro race." And the paper