

**Concert Notes**  
**Gary A. Greene, Ph.D.**

**John Williams**  
***Liberty Fanfare***

John Williams was born in Flushing (Queens), New York, as the son of a jazz percussionist. In his early adolescence, the young Williams moved with his family to Los Angeles. He attended UCLA and also studied composition privately with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. During his military service, he gained valuable professional experience as a conductor and arranger for the Air Force Band. After his discharge, he attended the Juilliard School as a piano student of Rosina Lhévinne, and he worked as a jazz pianist in the city, which employment led to collaborations with Henry Mancini and singer Frankie Laine. He later returned to Los Angeles and began work with the film studios alongside such greats as Franz Waxman, Bernard Herrmann, Alfred Newman, Jerry Goldsmith, and Elmer Bernstein. In his early years in Hollywood, his credits were sometimes under the name Johnny Williams, such as his themes for *Lost in Space*. Among his most memorable film scores are those for *The Cowboys*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Star Wars*, the various Indiana Jones films, the various Superman films, *Jurassic Park*, and many of the Harry Potter films.

Williams has also become known for his concert music both as conductor and composer. He was the music director of the Boston Pops Orchestra from 1980 to 1993. He retains a connection with the orchestra as its Laureate Conductor. He has composed a number of concerti, including a recent one for horn for Dale Clevenger of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He has also composed a number of works that fall into the general tradition of "occasional works": the theme for the *NBC Nightly News*, for example, and certainly the present work.

The *Liberty Fanfare* was composed in 1986 on a commission from the Statute of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation to be a part of the televised ceremonies on July 4, 1986, for the centennial of the Statue of Liberty. The work was actually premiered on June 4 by Williams leading the Boston Pops. Williams described the work at the time as being "about five minutes long, and it has a one-minute detachable front piece that will be the signature music for all of the ABC presentations connected with the Fourth of July. I've tried to create a group of American airs and tunes of my own invention that I hope will give some sense of the event and the occasion."

**Peter Boyer**  
***Ellis Island: The Dream of America***

Peter Boyer was born in Providence and completed the initial step in his formal studies in music with a Bachelor's degree from Rhode Island College. He then completed Master's and Doctoral degrees at the Hartt School (University of Hartford). He continued studies in composition with John Corigliano in New York and with Elmer Bernstein and others in Los Angeles as a student in the Scoring for Motion Pictures and Television program at USC. His music has been performed widely, having been included in the concerts of ensembles such as the Boston Pops Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony, the National Symphony, and the Bamberg [Germany] Symphony. In 2001, Boyer himself conducted the London Symphony Orchestra in a recording entirely devoted to his works.

Boyer led London's Philharmonia Orchestra in a 2003 recording of *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*. This recording received a Grammy nomination in 2006, and the work has become his best-known composition. In September 2010, *Symphony* magazine (published by The League of American Orchestras) described *Ellis Island: The Dream of America* as one of "a handful of recent works by living composers" that seemed destined to join the standard orchestral repertoire.

*Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, from 2002, is a work for a very large orchestra performing in tandem with either a group of seven actors (four female and three male) or two actors (one female and one male) and with various projected images from the Ellis Island archives. The texts for the actors come from

interviews with immigrants preserved by the Ellis Island Oral History Project. Boyer focuses on the lives of seven such immigrants who arrived at Ellis Island between 1910 and 1940, and then concludes his work with the famous 1883 sonnet by Emma Lazarus, *The New Colossus*:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The work was commissioned by the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts to mark the opening season of the Belding Theater within the Center. *Ellis Island: The Dream of America* was first performed by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of the composer, at the Center in April 2002. This performance was broadcast on National Public Radio's *SymphonyCast* program in July 2002.

### **Antonin Dvořák** **Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95 (*Z Nového Světa* or "From the New World")**

Dvořák came into the world as the son of a butcher in a small village in that western area of what is now the Czech Republic known as Bohemia. Growing up, he helped in the shop but also studied the violin. At age 14, he was sent to relatives in Zlonice to further his musical education (with lessons in viola, organ, piano, and counterpoint)--and to learn German. Bohemia was a part of the larger Germanic world politically and culturally, so fluency in German would be vital to a career in the arts. After further studies in Prague, he landed a violist position in the Prague National Theater orchestra under Bedřich Smetana, and he began composing.

Part of Dvořák's challenge as a composer was to escape the pervading influence of Wagner in order to be able to express his own nationalist interests in music. Fortunately, he came into the orbit of Brahms, no Wagnerian himself, and Brahms introduced him to the publisher Simrock. By his early forties, he was an important composer; a decade later, he was one of the most important living composers. So when Jeannette Thurber, founder of the National Conservatory of Music in New York (one of the earliest efforts to provide American musicians an alternative to European travel to complete their educations), sought a "name" musician to head the Conservatory and lend it prestige and legitimacy, she achieved a major coup in securing Dvořák.

While in the United States (for three years), Dvořák completed or composed wholly a number of important works: the cello concerto, the *Biblical Songs*, a string quartet, and his string quintet. But, likely, the most important musical event of 1893 in America was the debut of Dvořák's Ninth Symphony, which occurred at an open rehearsal of the New York Philharmonic Society on the afternoon of December 15 with the presentation at a formal concert occurring the following evening under Anton Seidl. This was of such importance that Henry Krehbiel, music critic for the *New York Tribune*, received a full page for his article on the symphony, which included a number of musical excerpts illustrating the discussion on the work. (In the article, the symphony was numbered as the Fifth, as it was known through much of the 20th century before four early symphonies were discovered and caused a re-numbering.)

Most commentators hear in this work a strong influence of African-American melody. Curiously, however, Leonard Bernstein argued that the subtitle suggests not a musical postcard from this hemisphere but an expression of the composer's very deep homesickness. Whether the themes are immediately derived from his exposure to Black American musical styles (and the case for that is strong) or Czech melodies tinged by that same exposure (also arguable), Americans embraced this work immediately as a cultural evocation of this nation.