

Imagining America

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5 | 7:30 P.M.

SAMUEL COLERDIGE-TAYLOR
(1875-1912)

Nonet in F minor, Op. 2 (1893)

25 min

Allegro energico
Andante con moto
Scherzo: Allegro
Finale: Allegro vivace

James Button, oboe
Titus Underwood, oboe
Gabriel Campos Zamora, clarinet
Andrew Brady, bassoon
Dominic Rotella, horn
Wyatt Underhill, violin
Samantha Rodriguez, viola
Joseph Johnson, cello
Paul Macres, bass
Henry Kramer, piano

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
(1841-1904)

Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major, Op. 81 (1887)

40 min

Allegro ma non tanto
Dumka: Andante con moto
Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace
Finale: Allegro

Wyatt Underhill and Felicity James, violin
Olivia Chew, viola
Austin Fisher, cello
Kenny Broberg, piano
Mr. Broberg appears by arrangement with the Cliburn.



This concert is sponsored in part by Hunt Utilities/Happy Dancing Turtle and MidMinnesota Federal Credit Union.

Nonet - Coleridge-Taylor

Composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor came from a background that was unlike many of his contemporaries'. His mother Alice was an unmarried teenager when she got pregnant in 1875, and he never knew his biological father, Dr. Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor. (Because of the difficulty of making a living as a Black doctor in London in the 1870s, Dr. Taylor returned to his native Sierra Leone, likely before Alice even knew she was pregnant.)

Samuel proved to be musically talented. His stepfather played the violin and taught him the basics. Later, his maternal grandfather paid for additional lessons. Ultimately, the entire family banded together to pay his tuition at London's Royal College of Music, where he studied with the same professor who taught Holst and Vaughan Williams.

As an adult, Coleridge-Taylor became a beloved musical celebrity in Britain and abroad. He felt a special connection to the United States, given that he was a descendant of enslaved Americans. He visited President Roosevelt in 1904, inspired the formation of a 200-voice Black chorus in Washington, D.C. called the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society, and even had several American public schools named after him.

It is one of the great tragedies of music history that Coleridge-Taylor died at 37 of pneumonia. Unfortunately, as the musical canon was crafted in the mid-twentieth century, Coleridge-Taylor was not lionized, celebrated, or advocated for in the same way his white contemporaries - Holst and Vaughan Williams, for example - were. Accordingly, he has since slipped into comparative obscurity. Hopefully modern-day performers and listeners will rectify that error.

Coleridge-Taylor's *Nonet* dates from 1894, the year the composer turned 19. It's a hugely ambitious work for a teenager, written for two violins, viola, cello, piano, clarinet, horn, oboe, and bassoon. As a student, Coleridge-Taylor idolized Dvořák, and the lush instrumentation and effortlessly spun melodies prove it. The *Nonet* consists of four movements: a soulful *Allegro energico*, a sweepingly sincere *Andante*, a gallop of a *Scherzo* (with a meltingly romantic interlude in the middle), and a bright and optimistic finale marked *Allegro vivace*.

Piano Quintet - Dvořák

Compared to many composers, Antonín Dvořák was a late bloomer. He was born in 1841, but he didn't find the support that he needed to launch an international career until the mid-1870s, when he won the Austrian State Prize for Composition three times. Johannes Brahms was on the

jury and, impressed by the brilliance of the thirtysomething's works, he offered to help him out in whatever way he could. One of those ways was by introducing Dvořák to his publisher, who soon took him on as a client and commissioned a set of *Slavonic Dances* from him. These dances rapidly secured Dvořák's reputation as one of the leading composers of the day.

Happily, Dvořák was not just a one-hit wonder. Throughout the 1880s he produced a series of wonderful works, and over the course of seven weeks between August and October 1887, he wrote one of his best: his A-major string quintet, op. 82. This quintet is clearly written by a composer who knows exactly what he wants to say and how he wants to say it. There are a few especially memorable characteristics to listen for: lush melodies, a folk-music flavor, and, perhaps most notably, dramatic shifts in mood.

These kaleidoscopic mood changes are evident from the very beginning. The quintet opens with a rocking motion in the piano, accompanying wistful sighs in the cello. But thirty seconds in, that dreamy mood vanishes utterly and without warning, as all five musicians start to aggressively clamber, offering a series of ever-more exuberant statements, like a group of competitive kids trying to one-up one another.

The second movement, *Dumka*, is the quintet's centerpiece. The dictionary definition of "dumka" is "an Eastern European folk ballad or lament usually with alternating slow and fast sections," but Dvořák adapted it for his own use (the built-in contrasts served this quintet especially well). A mournful first theme is initially played by the viola, then returns in a variety of guises. In between the theme's reappearances, Dvořák effortlessly weaves in charming contrasting material, ultimately going so far as to provide a spirited vivace in 2/8 time that sounds as wild as a tipsy Czech wedding band.

The third movement *furiant* (a type of rapid-paced Czech dance) has the virtuosic whirl of a too-fast waltz. The contrasting trio section transforms that waltz into a kind of gauzy dream, making it all the more invigorating when the movement's first theme makes a galloping return.

The finale takes the energy of a rustic fiddler and pours it into a severe, rigorous, almost Brahmsian mold. A flurry of a fugue passes to dizzying effect, eventually blossoming into a radiant chorale that seems as if it might end the piece. But Dvořák can't resist one last mood change, and instead, the quintet ends on a note of scampering excitement.