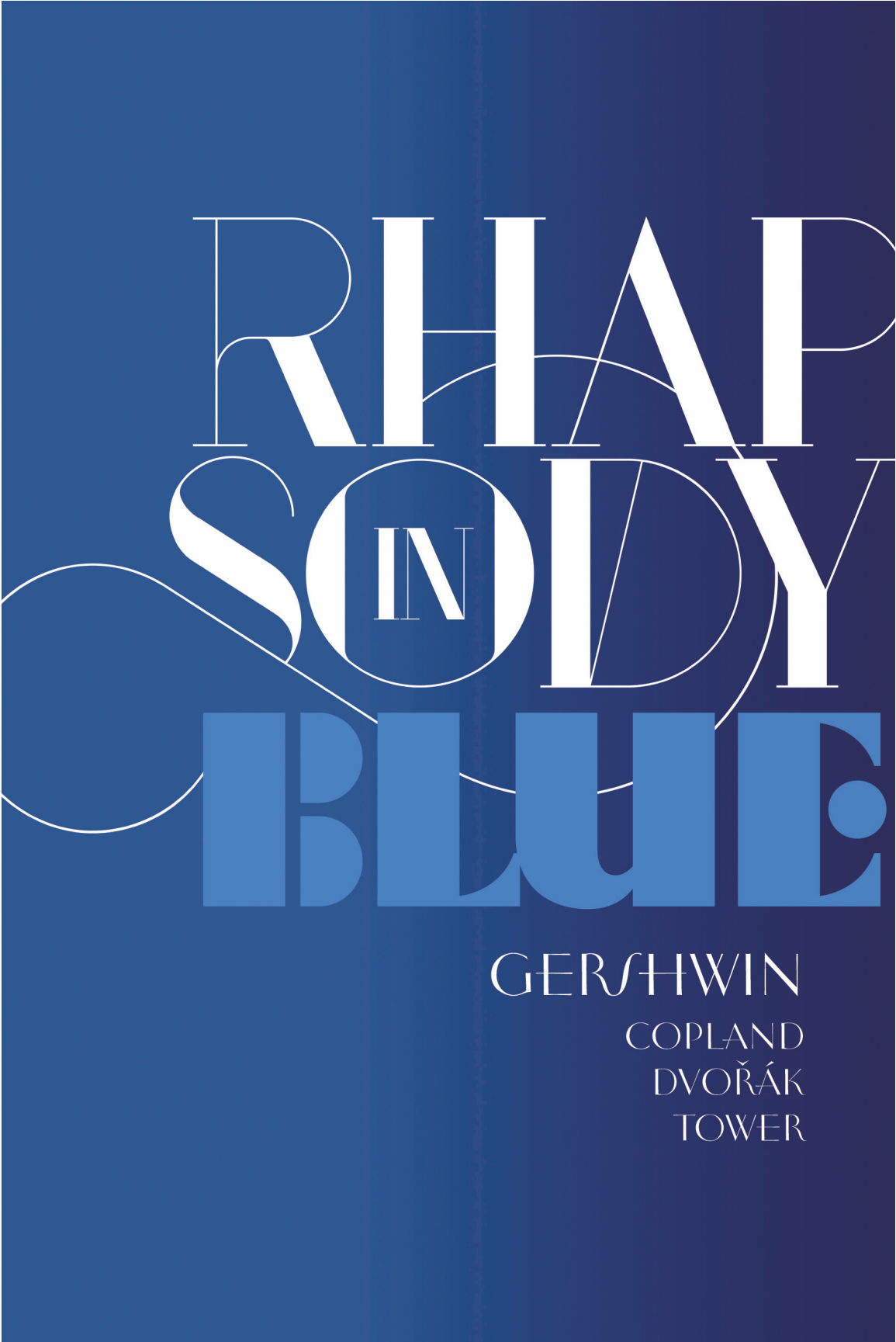




RHAPSODY IN BLUE

GERSHWIN
COPLAND
DVOŘÁK
TOWER

November 16 & 17, 2024

SUNSET CENTER, CARMEL

Sponsored by
The William H. and Patricia M. Smith Family Foundation

Jayce Ogren, Music Director and Conductor
Adam Golka, piano

The Star-Spangled Banner
[running time 2']

Music by John Stafford Smith
(1750-1836)
Lyrics by Francis Scott Key
(1779-1843)

Fanfare for the Common Man [3']

Aaron Copland
(1900-1990)

Orchestral Variations [13']

Aaron Copland

Rhapsody in Blue [16']

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

INTERMISSION [20']

***Fanfare for the Uncommon
Woman, No. 1*** [3']

Joan Tower
(b. 1938)

**Symphony No.9 in E minor, Op. 95
"From the New World"** [42']

Antonin Dvořák
(1841-1904)

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

*The November concert will be rebroadcast on KAZU's HD2 Classical station
on December 7th and 8th, 2024, both at 4 PM.*

Program Notes

By Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli

NOVEMBER 16–17, 2024

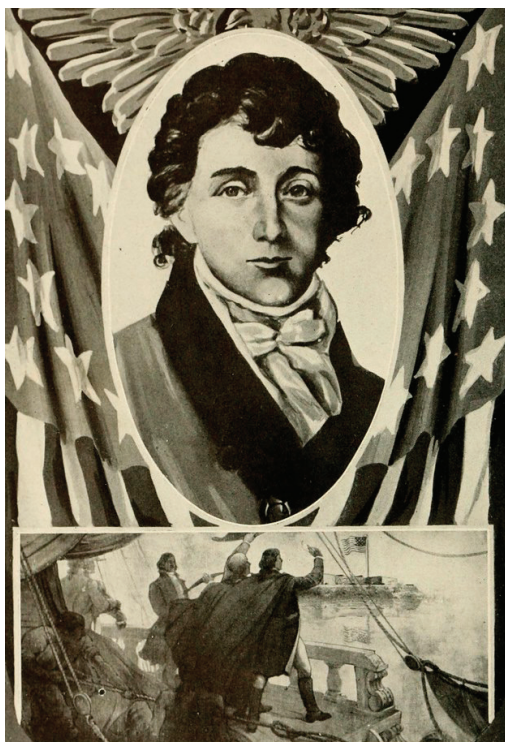
Concert Synopsis

A **luminous American prism** reveals facets of the nation's diverse musical character. The program opens with two anthems, one official and one adopted: The *Star-Spangled Banner* and Copland's iconic *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Orchestral Variations finds Copland as an *American in Paris* embracing the continent's new modernist sounds. The precocious New York songsmith George Gershwin burst onto the classical scene with his dazzling *Rhapsody in Blue*, a Jazz Age masterpiece celebrating its 100th birthday in 2024. Living American icon Joan Tower composed a spirited response to Copland with her *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*, No.1. The program closes with Dvorák's beloved *New World Symphony*, a work that sought to establish an American identity from a European perspective.

The Star-Spangled Banner (1814)

Music by John Stafford Smith (1750–1836)

Lyrics by Francis Scott Key (1779–1843)



On **September 14th 1814**, the United States appeared dangerously close to losing the War of 1812. British troops burned the U.S. Capitol and advanced their attack on another critical stronghold, Fort McHenry, in Baltimore. That night, American lawyer and amateur poet Francis Scott Key sat imprisoned on a British warship in the Baltimore harbor. As he watched the "rockets' red glare," he began composing a poem: *The Defense of Fort McHenry*.

Key awoke the next morning to find the battle was over and "our flag was still there." U.S. Troops held the fort! After his release, Key shared the poem with his brother-in-law who discovered the verses fit the popular drinking song *To Anacreon in Heaven* by John Stafford Smith (ironically, a Brit). Published as *The Star-Spangled Banner*, Americans quickly adopted it as a song of national pride. An Act of Congress established it as the U.S. National Anthem in 1931.

Fanfare for the Common Man (1943)

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)



As America entered the Great

Depression, Aaron Copland wanted his music to reflect the experience and concerns of the “common man.” Known as a leading composer of New York’s modernist avant-garde, Copland turned his attention to field recordings of American and Mexican folk music published by the Library of Congress in 1935. Copland mined the music for motifs and rhythms that would infuse his compositions with a popular spirit and connect with a wider audience. His new style was forged in a 1938 ballet score for choreographer Martha Graham, *Billy the Kid*, based on the Old West folk hero. The music’s open sonorities and folkdance rhythms resonated deeply with audiences and came to define the sound of American music. Copland won the Pulitzer Prize for another collaboration with Graham, *Appalachian Spring*.

Fanfare for the Common Man represents Copland’s American sound adapted to a more solemn occasion. Commissioned in 1943 in support of the nation’s World War II effort, the title references Vice President Henry Wallace’s speech “The Century of the Common Man.” The fanfare begins with powerful percussion strikes followed by consonant, vaulting brass motifs and hymn-like chorales. It reveals a composer committed to clarity and directness, qualities that would help solidify this work’s status as an American classic. To Copland, the enlisted soldier epitomized the common man and, in the composer’s words, “he deserved a fanfare.”

Orchestral Variations (1958)

Aaron Copland

“If a young man at the age of twenty-three can write a work like the one you’ve just heard,” said conductor Walter Damrosch to his 1925 New York concert audience, “in five years he’ll be ready to commit murder.” Damrosch’s affectionately sarcastic remark received a hearty laugh, even from the young man in question: Aaron Copland. Before achieving his popular American sound, Copland confronted listeners with searing, dissonant, and angular music. The composer had recently made a pilgrimage to Paris to study with famed pedagogue Nadia Boulanger and experience cutting-edge premieres by the likes of Stravinsky and Debussy. In 1930 he composed his most aggressive work to date: *Piano Variations*.

The twenty seamlessly-connected variations that follow create a journey through a multitude of tempos and textures.

Nearly thirty years later, Copland returned to his younger, vanguard self with an orchestral arrangement of *Piano Variations* fittingly titled *Orchestral Variations*. The piece opens with a crisp four-note motif. “The notes are dealt out one by one,” says conductor Michael Tilson Thomas, “like tough cards in a poker game.” The twenty seamlessly-connected variations that follow create a journey through a multitude of tempos and textures. Copland displays exceptional skill by infusing the varied episodes with his four-note motif’s sonic signature. He took Boulanger’s advice to heart: “Write down lots of notes,” she said, “but keep only those that really matter.”

Rhapsody in Blue (1924) George Gershwin (1898–1937)



In 1937 George Gershwin visited **Carmel-by-the-Sea** to meet a poet he greatly admired, Robinson Jeffers. The two spent an afternoon at “Tor House,” Jeffers’ remote residence on Carmel Point, where they discussed all manner of things creative. Gershwin performed on the Steinway grand piano in their living room while Jeffers autographed books of his poetry. No record exists of what Gershwin played that day, but we can imagine excerpts from *Rhapsody in Blue*, the American masterpiece celebrating its centenary in 2024.

A decade prior to his Carmel visit, the twenty-something George Gershwin dazzled Manhattan’s high society with his Broadway musicals and Tin Pan Alley hits. In 1924 bandleader Paul Whiteman encouraged Gershwin to compose a virtuosic classical piece incorporating jazz. Many conservative concert-goers still considered the new art form a corrupting influence, but Gershwin vigorously defended it: “I heard [jazz] as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America, of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness.”

Gershwin’s “jazz concerto” premiered at New York’s Aeolian Hall in a program with a lofty title: *Experiments in Modern Music*. At the end of a long program of works now mostly forgotten, Gershwin walked on stage to perform “A Rhapsody in Blue.” The opening clarinet glissando perked up the audience. One hundred years later audiences are still at rapt attention. *Rhapsody in Blue* contrasts energetic solo piano episodes with broad, expansive orchestral themes. Though strictly notated, it possesses the essential quality of jazz: a sense of spontaneity and improvisation.

Fanfare for the Common Woman, No. 1 (1987) Joan Tower (b. 1938)



Joan Tower composed *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*, No. 1 as the first in a six-part series inspired by Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man*. It shares the same instrumentation and much of its open resonant character. Tower’s lively textures and rhythmic drive

set it apart. “It is dedicated to women who take risks and are adventurous,” says Tower. The composer dedicated this first work in the series to celebrated conductor Marin Alsop.

Joan Tower, one of the most lauded composers of her generation, became the first woman to win the distinguished Grawemeyer Award in composition for her orchestral work *Silver Ladders* in 1990. A native of New York city, she currently teaches at Bard College in Annandale-On-Hudson, New York.

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 "From the New World" (1893)

Antonin Dvořák (1841–1904)



Prior to Gershwin and Copland, European Romanticism dominated American concert halls. The audiences craved music they could call their own and, in 1892, wealthy New York arts patron Jeanette Thurber

hatched a plan to provide it. She reached out to Antonin Dvořák, a composer who captured the soul of his native Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) through brilliant use of the region's folk music. International hits like *Slavonic Dances* firmly established Dvořák as a leader of the Bohemian "national style."

Why reach out to a European? Thurber wanted America's young composers to follow in Dvořák's footsteps by embracing their own folk music and, in the process, their own identity. Dvořák welcomed the idea and Thurber made him a handsome offer to head up the National Conservatory of Music, an institution she founded in 1885. Dvořák accepted and arrived in New York on September 27, 1892.

For Dvořák, authentic American folk music meant African American Spirituals and Native American music. He intended to immerse himself in that music and compose a new symphony incorporating it as a roadmap for his students to follow. Thurber suggested that he title it "From the New World." Dvořák absorbed Spirituals via performances by Harry Burleigh, an African American baritone singer and student at the conservatory. To hear Native American music, Dvořák ventured to Iowa to attend Oglala Sioux ceremonies at Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. For her part, Jeanette Thurber gave Dvořák a copy of Longfellow's poem *The Song of Hiawatha*, about the Native American chieftain.

With all of this American influence and intention Dvořák produced a symphony squarely in the European Romantic tradition, containing an abundance of stirring, memorable themes that weave and develop throughout the four

movements. The first movement, Allegro molto, features a spritely transformation of the spiritual *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* in the flute. The second movement, Largo, presents a beloved solo by the oboe's deeper-voiced sibling the English horn, an instrument chosen for its similarity to Burleigh's baritone. This poignant theme portrays the death of Minnehaha from *Song of Hiawatha* and later became a spiritual of its own, *Goin' Home*. The third movement scherzo, Molto vivace ("very fast"), opens with a startling timpani flourish that echoes Beethoven's Ninth symphony. The finale, Allegro con fuoco ("with fire"), opens with an aggressive motive in cellos and basses portending a tumultuous, but ultimately joyous, conclusion.

Musicologists have spilled a lot of ink discussing the *New World Symphony's* "American-ness," but maestro Leonard Bernstein sums it up best: "...what a beautiful 'Old World' Symphony it turned out to be."

Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli

PROGRAM NOTES AUTHOR



Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli's innovative compositions for the concert stage, his deeply-felt scores for the studio and indie film worlds, and his skilled musical direction for artists from across the pop music spectrum earned him a reputation as a musician with a collaborative spirit and a broad vision.

His current release, *Continent's End*, received "Critic's Choice" from *Opera News*. The nine-song concert work for mezzo-soprano and piano on poems by California iconoclast Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) "perfectly embodies with its unpredictable harmonic twists and turns and its multi-tonality Jeffers' hyper-masculine, pantheistic, often erotic poetry" (*Raphael's Music Notes*). Nominated for an Emmy Award at age twenty-one, Anderson-Bazzoli composed scores for twenty feature and short films including the Venezuelan thriller *Ellipsis* (Fox) and the technology documentary *Revolution OS* (7th Art), among others. He received a Sundance Composer Fellowship and served as copyist, music librarian, or orchestrator on over three hundred films and TV shows including *Disney's Encanto*, *The Lion King* (2019), and *Top Gun Maverick*. As a conductor he worked with top recording artists Michael Bublé, Dr. Dre, Christina Aguilera, and She & Him (Zooey Deschanel and M. Ward) and served as editor and copyist for eminent composer-conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen.

While growing up in Pacific Grove, California, Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli learned tuba at age eleven, graduated from Stevenson School, and later earned a B.A. in Tuba and an M.A. in Music Composition from UCLA. In 2022 he relocated from Los Angeles to Carmel with his wife Donna Eshelman, a neuromuscular therapist and choreographer.