

# SYMPHONY NO. 9, “From the New World”

**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK** (1841–1904)

**BIOGRAPHY:** Dvořák was born and raised in Central Bohemia (present day Czech Republic). He grew up in a family of hard working butchers and innkeepers, many of whom also had a passion for music. He was one of nine children and began mastering the violin as a young child. Because of his talent, he did not follow his family into their business, but relied on close relationships with teachers and instructors to pursue a life of music. During a young age, he became fascinated with trains which developed into an interest in transportation and travel throughout his life. Much of his music is inspired by his travels and incorporates “folk” music of places he visited. His first success was the hymn “The Heirs of the White Mountain” and after this, he composed more works for orchestra, string quartet and opera. His music followed that of Smetana as the foundation of Czech nationalist music. He eventually married and had 9 children, unfortunately losing the first three due to various health issues. [Read more about Dvořák on Classics for Kids.](#)



▶ **[LISTEN](#) to Symphony No. 9, “From the New World”**

**ABOUT THE MUSIC:** One of the most well known works of Dvořák’s and even of symphonic repertoire, Symphony No. 9, “From the New World”, premiered in 1893. This symphony was written after Dvořák’s travels to America. He was inspired by African-American spirituals and melodies, along with Native American music. The physical landscape of America intrigued him as well, with its “wide open spaces” which are reflected in his music, giving a “western exploration” feel. Although Dvořák wrote with influences of Beethoven and Brahms, he was most inspired by African-American spirituals and dove into studying them with an African-American student and upcoming composer Harry Burleigh. He often spoke about how the future of music in America was rooted in African-American music and composers should look to this style for their inspiration and writing. The [second movement](#) features a now well-known melody “Goin’ Home”. The [fourth movement](#) begins with an exhilarating opening, which to younger listeners may sound reminiscent of the *Jaws* theme or “Baby Shark”.

## FUN FACTS:

### Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 "From the New World"

- The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra performed Symphony No. 9 "From the New World" for their first ever performance on live TV in 1997 on PBS.

**What talent would you share if you were on television?**

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- Neil Armstrong, the first person to walk on the moon, brought a recording of New World Symphony into space with him. [READ](#) about Neil Armstrong.

**What music would you bring into space with you?**

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- The beginning of the [fourth movement](#) might sound familiar to fans of the film *Jaws* or "Baby Shark" fans.

**What image do you picture when you hear this movement?**

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## COMPOSITION INSPIRATION:

Dvořák wrote Symphony No. 9, "From the New World", about his travels to America, so it reflects the music he heard here like African-American Spirituals and Native American melodies. **Find a similar inspiration and create a melody to hum or sing of your own using the steps below:**

1. If you can safely do so, **take a walk** either in your backyard, your neighborhood or even a part of your home you are less familiar with.
2. **Observe** the area you're walking through: How would you describe the environment? What do you feel while walking?
3. Use your reflection of your walk as inspiration to **compose a short melody** either humming, or using an instrument around your house.

## WATCH & EXPLORE:

### Antonín Dvořák, Symphony No. 9, “From the New World”

In the second movement (II. Largo), a familiar tune called “Goin’ Home” is the central [theme](#). This theme is slow and sweet, and about the feeling of “home”.

**WATCH** CSO Principal English Horn, [Christopher Philpotts](#), perform the solo of the theme in the second movement.

**WATCH** Yo-Yo Ma perform “Goin’ Home”.

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Symphony No. 9 has many memorable themes throughout the four-movement work. Use the Variation Playground on MusEdlab to move around different themes and create variations of the symphony!

### **TRY THE VARIATION PLAYGROUND**

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For advanced readers, **LEARN** about Dvořák’s passion for the music he found in traveling to the US, particularly African American spirituals.

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**HEAR** a mash up of Star Wars and the fourth movement (IV. Allegro con fuoco) of Symphony No. 9 to recognize the similarities in the music and show the influence this work had on film composer John Williams.

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If you haven’t already, **SIGN UP** for the Artswave Community Playlist and hear this work as the featured music selection the week of April 13.