

Quad City Symphony Orchestra  
**PROGRAM NOTES**  
Masterworks VI: Quad Cities Past and Present

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**CARLOS CHÁVEZ (1899-1978)**  
*Sinfonía India*

**Instrumentation:** Piccolo, 3 flutes (third flute doubling second piccolo), 3 oboes, e-flat clarinet, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, 4 percussion, harp, and strings.

**Premiere:** Radio broadcast, January 23, 1936, CBS Orchestra, the composer conducting. Concert premiere, April 10, 1936, Boston Symphony Orchestra, the composer conducting.  
**QCSO Premiere.**

The phenomenon of blending indigenous music into concert music is by no means a twentieth-century phenomenon: countless composers from Haydn to Holst sought to integrate the tunes, rhythms, and harmonies of folk music (real or imagined) into their chamber, vocal, and orchestral works. From the mid-nineteenth century this gesture became especially important to composers from outside Germany, who employed folk tunes to embrace their national identities and to challenge German hegemony in concert music. In Europe, this trend reached its twentieth-century apex in the works of Jean Sibelius, Igor Stravinsky, and most especially Béla Bartók, whose field research into Hungarian folk music essentially established the modern field of ethnomusicology.

Around that same time, this tide finally reached the Americas. In the United States,

Bartók had several equivalents both in research (the father-son duo of John and Alan Lomax) and composition (Aaron Copland, who first employed cowboy songs in his ballet *Billy the Kid*). And in Mexico, there was Carlos Chávez.

Born in Mexico City in 1899, Chavez served many important roles in national musical life: running the Mexican National Conservatory, directing the National Institute of Fine Arts, and, perhaps most importantly, founding the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico in 1947. Amid an active international conducting career, he maintained a steady output as a composer, writing many chamber and choral works, an opera, and six symphonies.

The second of these, *Sinfonía India*, remains his most-often-performed work, and the one most-steeped in Mexican music. Chavez was continuously intrigued by the music of his native place, with its unique blend of Spanish and Native American cultures. As Dvorák did in his *New World Symphony*, Chavez filled his work with actual tunes from Mexican Indian sources. But unlike his predecessors in the nineteenth century symphonic tradition, Chavez's use of these melodies is entirely modern: as in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, the folk tunes in *Sinfonía India* are handled like intact cultural artifacts, to be displayed and repeated, not developed.

**Sinfonía India**  
**Listening Guide**

♫ Although this work is titled “symphony”, it comprises a single movement just over 10 minutes, shorter than many single symphonic movements. Some commentators have pointed to a kind of miniature multi-movement structure in the work, but the general effect of the form is one of a chain of contrasting sections, not unlike *An American in Paris*, which had premiered just a few years before.

♫ To follow the rhythmic interest of this work, use both your ears and your eyes: watch the conductor to observe the frequent, irregular changes of meter. Added to this is the complication of frequent, minor tempo alterations at the ends of phrases.

♫ Listen for the high-pitched woodwinds: often Chavez has the E-flat clarinet and the piccolo chirping and soaring vividly above the rest of the ensemble.

♫ Chavez called for a wide array of indigenous percussion instruments; most percussion sections performing the work use some combination of modern orchestral percussion instruments and their more-authentic counterparts.

♫ Unlike the carefully voice-led harmonies we will hear from Dvorák, Chavez’s harmonic vocabulary is often quite static; he builds tension primarily by adding orchestral layers and raising the dynamics.

♫ The piece’s last big crescendo features that quintessential Latin American rhythm, 2 against 3. The technical term for this is *hemiola*.

JAMES M. STEPHENSON (b. 1969)

*CitySpeaks*

a tone poem for orchestra including spoken-word artist, narrator, multimedia audio/visuals

**Instrumentation:** Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, 4 percussion, harp, and strings.

**QCSO Commission.**

**World Premiere.**

Composer Jim Stephenson writes:

*Always seeking ways to expand my musical vocabulary, and when asked to write a new work for the Quad City Symphony, I proposed the idea of a “tone-poem” that would celebrate the cities of the region by using many forms of artistic expression; a means to highlight the different cultures and talents of the quad cities, and to represent both its past and its present.*

*When I was supplied with one artistic rendering of the cities surrounding the river, an immediate idea for the form of the work sprang to mind, which inspired me musically and experientially.*

*Which was: to have 5 “blocks of sound” surrounding the orchestra, whereas each block represents a city, and the orchestra (woodwinds) represent the river. The blocks are: Davenport (2 trumpets/trombone); Bettendorf (timpani/percussion); East Moline (horn, trombone, bass trombone); Moline (strings); Rock Island (3 French horns). Furthermore, each group would play rhythmic fanfares that rhythmically emulated that of their respective city. Throughout this process, the woodwinds*

flow along, representing the river in the middle.

Once these fanfares subside, the tone-poem begins to work clockwise from Davenport on around, giving each city its proper dedicated music. Images on the screen accompany almost the entire work, so as to give visual reference points to the performed music.

Davenport is long known as being the home of the famous jazz cornetist of the early 20th century, Bix Beiderbecke. Thus, the music melts into one of his own most famous compositions: "Davenport Blues". An actual recording of Bix and his band play, while slowly the orchestra begins to comment, but in music of the present day quasi hip-hop). The text for the spoken-word artist comes from "Quad Cities (the places we grew up)" by Adrian Cole and "My Hometown Sings" by Erin Hantz. These poems were selected from *The Atlas*, the annual literary magazine published by the Midwest Writing Center's Young Emerging Writers program. Finally, we launch into full-fledged contemporary music, as edgy commentary is delivered about modern-day life.

Strings and oboe take us into Bettendorf, with purely orchestral lush music and flowing counterpoint. As this music quiets down, we cross the river, aided by a poem by Quad Cities native Dick Stahl: "The Mississippi River, My Compass". The music builds again, now referencing East Moline (horns) in bold and beautiful fashion.

Moline takes on more of a busy highly-spirited tone, reminiscent of a town hard at work (the word Moline comes from the

French "moulin", or "mill town"), and so the sonorities of fast-pace and factory-life (John Deere) transition us toward Rock Island.

The spoken-word artist returns once again, bringing us back to present-day, with a poignant delivery about the gritty but nostalgic memories of a childhood spent in Rock Island. The final text of "she sings" is echoed throughout the orchestra, as once again the river begins to flow.

Fanfare memories again begin to hearken, with Dick Stahl's poem about Bix once again launching us back into a full-on orchestral accompaniment to Bix performing his "Davenport Blues". Finally the modern-day orchestra takes over, once and for all, complete with the orchestra's own "jazz combo" out front, and the triumphant fanfares return, sending the music and its cities' representation to a glorious finish.

I am most grateful to Music Director Mark Russell Smith, and the Quad City Symphony administration, for engaging me to dive deep into the history of their area, so that I might do my best to give it proper representation. It is projects like this that give my creative output depth, and flavor, and I most enjoyed formulating a musical scheme to combine so many elements of history and arts into a unique musical work.

## TEXTS

### "Quad Cities (the places we grew up)"

By Adrian Cole

Crossed into four sections then into another four and another four

Further into the cornfield with white tower-  
ing clouds  
They meet halfway fingers so close to  
touching  
Hostile sunlight fades in the creek  
A thousand hostile eyes set into one face  
Set on one face.

Ears of corn  
Set in sections of four then another four  
and another four

I am on the bike path  
The moon Smiles kisses my hand as I  
Pull back into an over polite curtsy  
Pull back into an over polite voice

Pull back  
Into an over polite life  
Still unwelcome by the sunlight

Sidewalk  
Placed in rows of four then another four  
and another

I am on the train tracks  
Balancing the rails  
They are abandoned  
Or repaired  
Grinding down the same route  
Calling sirens over and over to the hills  
then  
All the way to the creek and back past  
the house

The Railroad is  
Planks of four then another four and an-  
other

I am along the river  
Drowning  
is the rivers best friend  
Lean over the cobweb docks  
Make games of balancing on stones

While avoiding goose shit disguised as  
rocks  
Stare into that tempest face  
It stares back with open inviting arms  
Not an embrace but a lure  
The River  
Splits into four then another and another

I am at the house  
Cigarettes stain  
Memory into the walls  
Holes from fistfights  
The number's too specific  
Floorboards peel  
Barely not falling apart is the motto of  
The desperate  
Kisses  
Then tucked into bed never getting a real  
goodbye  
No closure can't admit the loss of it  
This House is  
Fractures of four, four, four

I am home  
Which has been  
All of this and an unruly splash of smoke  
and glitter  
Covering the skeleton  
This overfilled  
Bedroom  
There is too much shit for it to be  
This empty  
Still  
I am  
Crossed into four sections then into an-  
other four and another four

**From "The Mississippi River, My Com-  
pass"  
By Richard Stahl**

Long as I can see, taste or feel its pres-  
ence,

I never get lost in the Quad Cities.  
My internal compass reacts  
to the fierce magnetism  
of this fabled silver streak, this Mississippi  
River.

One glance at the sun-stippled water  
flowing west  
with its dashing waves, forward rolls,  
and million points of light serves me di-  
rection,  
distance and a call

like an oracle.

I look down  
and I'm up with the current  
that makes this part of the river  
a natural watermark  
for travelers.

I tap my refreshing Mississippi Highball  
like a tonic, each drop  
a generous  
libation from the gods –

pure and clean, fresh  
and miraculous in effervescence.  
That's the tone poem playing  
in my psyche right now, a short composi-  
tion  
on river music  
and lore,  
transformative and transcendent.

### **"my hometown sings"**

**By Erin Hantz**

rock island sings with her jaw broken and  
hung loose.  
she sings like the others can't hear her.  
no, she sings because the others can hear  
her.

she knows she sounds like a throat full of  
potholes.  
she knows the swing of her strings can  
only be chopped up to overture.  
she cannot forget the way everyone ends  
up leaving her.  
but she sings in soft sweeps across empty  
streets and in tunneled echoes.  
she sings just like she taught jake and el-  
wood.  
she sings in her dust raided tongue.  
she sings like syrupy saxophone welling  
up in every hollow building.  
she sings about her arsenal of for-  
givenness;  
she does not know how to manufacture  
such dangerous weapons anymore.  
she sings like lungs filled with rain that re-  
fuse to drown.  
she sings against melodramatics and sen-  
sational static.  
she sings she sings she sings.  
it is your own fault if you can't hear her.

### **From "A Bix Citizen" (adapted)**

**By Richard Stahl**

I hear his mood music  
playing from his liquid cornet,

his hot horn rising to the heavens  
like calliope puffs  
into its otherworldly

undercurrents. My restless soul deep  
dances  
in the local speakeasies, bold sounds  
wrapping themselves  
around me like his wraparound porch  
on Grand Avenue, one tonal sweep  
that turns everything so sensuous around,  
O Jazz Man!

## ANTONÍN DVORÁK (1841-1904) Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (second doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

**Premiere:** April 22, 1885, St. James Hall, London.

**QCSO Performance History:** This is the fourth set of performances of this work in QCSO history. James Dixon conducted performances in 1977 and 1991, and Harvey Felder led the most recent performances in 2006.

Throughout his life, Antonín Dvorák exhibited a striking paradox of personality. On one hand, his disposition and affinities—rural-at-heart, nationalistic, devoutly religious—remained stable and unchanging. On the other hand, he was extraordinarily impressionable, consistently opening his mind and his art to new experiences and modes of expression. His daily habits were exceedingly pedestrian: daily Mass, teaching, walks in the country, leisure time with family. But he frequently sought opportunities abroad and easily made friends in cosmopolitan enclaves around Europe and America. He wrote frequently and passionately about his love for the fatherland, and yet he was always deeply receptive to other cultures, relishing the drumming performances of Native Americans during his summer in Spillville, Iowa and enthusiastically encouraging his many black composition students in New York, one of whom, Harry T. Burleigh, he embraced as a collaborator and close family friend.

Thus, we as listeners benefit from examining his works from two angles: in what way does it emanate from the person that Dvorák always and unchangeably was, and how does it reflect the many outside experiences and influences to which he was habitually open?

In the case of Symphony No. 7, Dvorák's Slavic roots are quite clearly on display. The rhythmic energy, persistent minor key, and rustic themes are familiar from composer's other nationalistic works; he said that the first theme occurred to him instantaneously while observing his countrymen arrive in Prague by train. Written (like Haydn's Symphony No. 104, which we heard on Masterworks II) for a British audience, Dvorák would himself later explain that the work, at least in part, explains to the wider world the fortitude of the Czech people.

As to outside influences in Symphony No. 7, many commentators have pointed to Johannes Brahms, particularly his Symphony No. 3, which premiered two years before Dvorák's Seventh. Brahms first noticed Dvorák's music while sitting on the jury of an Austrian composition competition (which Dvorák won), and the two composers developed a close friendship. Brahms' influence is most obvious in some of Dvorák's rhythms (listen for those times when the orchestra seems to resist or ignore the regular beat) and in the delicate contrapuntal woodwind writing in the slow movement. The relatively light, not-exactly-humorous Scherzo might also draw comparisons to the melancholic third movement of Brahms's Third.

### Dvorak 7 Listening Guide

#### **First movement: Allegro maestoso**

♯ Like Beethoven's Fifth (and Dvorak's own cello concerto), the work can be seen as the struggle between a minor key and its "parallel major", i.e., the struggle between D minor and D major. As we heard on Masterworks V, for Beethoven the major key triumphed at the beginning of the last movement; for

Dvorák, that struggle lasts a much longer time.

♪ Notice how the symphony's opening gestures are both forceful and somewhat broken, almost like Dvorák is trying insistently to light matches.

♪ The first movement's second theme is tender and somewhat drifting, but with more continuity than the first theme.

♪ The exposition's closing theme is a triumphant version of the opening. Unlike in most of the symphonies we have heard this season, the exposition is not repeated.

♪ The movement ends as it began, in whispers.

### **Second movement: Poco adagio**

♪ This movement features a series of poignant, lullaby-like themes, each of which leads to a glorious emotional outburst.

♪ The first theme is played by a unique woodwind quartet: the clarinet (as in Brahms 3) is in the lead, supported by an oboe and two bassoons. Notice the lightness effected by the light accompaniment of pizzicato strings.

♪ In the same vein, pay attention throughout this movement to the string accompaniment textures, which are sometimes minimalist and luminous, but at other times are elaborate and multifaceted.

♪ Several times throughout the movement, Dvorák features two of the string sections at once; for example, the first violins and violas have two poetic duets in octaves.

### **Third movement: Scherzo (Vivace)**

♪ As a scherzo should, this movement has a beat divided into three, and is in a "ternary" form (ABA). However, rather

than being joke-like (or fiercely intense), Dvorák's scherzo is reminiscent of Tchaikovsky's symphonic waltzes, elegant and congenial.

♪ In contrast to the continuous development of the first two movements, here Dvorák repeats a simple melody and its supporting harmonic progression many times, with a wide variety of orchestrations.

♪ If you thought this movement was a bit laid-back for a scherzo, the "Trio" passage is even friendlier, with bird-like, stuttering woodwind gestures and gently oscillating string accompaniment.

♪ Dvorák does seem eager for some excitement at the end of the Trio, but he backs off before the return of the amicable opening theme.

### **Fourth movement: Finale (Allegro)**

♪ The movement is headed off with a rustic, stomping theme, the most Slavic tune of the symphony.

♪ Most of the movement is quite fiery and fierce, except for a recurring, agreeable theme in the pleasant key of A major. This pacific strain, however, never lasts long.

♪ Though there are signs near the end of the Finale that a triumph of D major over D minor is coming, Dvorák keeps us guessing until the piece's final bars.