

Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Charles Lazarus, trumpet

American Expressions

Saturday, January 12, 2019, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
Sunday, January 13, 2019, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

During the American Expressions festival we gratefully recognize an anonymous couple for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra's Investing in Inspiration campaign.

With these concerts we express our deep gratitude to the Minnesota State Arts Board, through which the people of Minnesota provide significant support to the Minnesota Orchestra.

Special thanks to Paul and Margot Grangaard for supporting a live video recording of Heitzeg's American Nomad which will be filmed at this performance. The Grangaards also commissioned this composition in 2014.

William Schuman	<i>New England Triptych</i> Be Glad Then, America When Jesus Wept Chester	ca. 15'
Steve Heitzeg	<i>American Nomad</i> , for Trumpet and Orchestra Avenue of the Americas (for those without a home) Little Hymn to the Fields Trip (Where the Chords Have No Name) <i>Charles Lazarus, trumpet</i>	ca. 29'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Florence Price	<i>Symphony No. 1 in E minor</i> Allegro, ma non troppo Largo, maestoso Juba Dance Finale	ca. 39'

OH+

American Expressions roundtable discussion with Minnesota Orchestra musicians
Saturday, January 12, 7 pm, Auditorium
Sunday, January 13, 1 pm, Auditorium



Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Profile appears on page 6.



Charles Lazarus, trumpet

Charles Lazarus, who gave the world premiere performance of *American Nomad* in May 2015, has been a member of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2000. A soloist, composer and bandleader, Lazarus has created and starred in three

original orchestral shows: *A Night in the Tropics*, *American Riffs*, and *Fly Me to the Moon*, as well as an annual holiday show, *Merry and Bright*, which features his jazz ensemble. In April 2018, he was featured in a new program entitled *Our Love is Here to Stay* in collaboration with The Steeles and the Minnesota Orchestra. He has soloed with dozens of orchestras and ensembles throughout North America and has performed and taught master classes in every U.S. state, and in Canada, South America and throughout Europe and Asia. He has also been a member of several of the best-known brass ensembles in the world including Canadian Brass, Dallas Brass and Meridian Arts Ensemble. Lazarus has released four solo recordings, *Solo Settings*, *Zabava*, *Merry & Bright* and *Lovejoy*, and he serves on the faculty of the School of Music at the University of Minnesota. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

one-minute notes

Schuman: *New England Triptych*

Military marches, bugle fanfares and gently intertwining melodies showcase the early American character in William Schuman's *New England Triptych*—an upbeat, optimistic suite based on three hymns by the American Revolution-era composer William Billings.

Heitzeg: *American Nomad*

"A series of soundscapes that depict various American landscapes" is the composer's description of this trumpet concerto, *American Nomad*, inspired not only by scenery, but by our country's medley of cultures. It requires a soloist like Charles Lazarus—equally adept at performing classical music and improvising at jazz.

Price: *Symphony No. 1*

Florence Price's First Symphony earned a special place in musical history when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed it at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, making it the first symphony by an African American woman to be played by a major American orchestra. Paying homage to her cultural heritage, Price incorporates folk spirituals, high-energy percussion and traditional African dance music, blended eloquently with classical orchestral traditions such as brass chorales, gentle woodwind solos and rapid-paced string passages.



William Schuman

Born: August 4, 1910,
New York City

Died: February 16, 1992,
New York City

New England Triptych

Premiered: October 28, 1956

William Schuman is a prime example of a first-tier mid-20th century composer who has been all but eclipsed by the popularity of Gershwin, Copland and Bernstein. Arguably America's most distinguished 20th-century symphonist, Schuman was—at first—an unlikely candidate for that august designation.

As a boy Schuman studied violin, but he was more focused on popular music and jazz. His world changed abruptly at age 19 when he heard the New York Philharmonic in concert. The next day, he withdrew from NYU, quit his part-time job, and registered for courses in harmony and counterpoint at Malkin Conservatory. He advanced rapidly, supporting himself through jazz band arrangements and work in his father's printing business. In 1935 he earned a degree from Columbia, then studied privately with Roy Harris, who was then among America's most prominent composers.

the big break

When Aaron Copland drew Schuman's music to the attention of the Boston Symphony's conductor, Serge Koussevitzky, Schuman got his big break. Koussevitzky was a champion of new music and became an enthusiastic advocate, conducting a performance of Schuman's Second Symphony in 1939 and leading premieres of four other Schuman compositions between 1939 and 1943.

Schuman went on to a stellar career, earning two Pulitzer Prizes in music and the gold medal from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1982, among other awards. His academic career was equally distinguished: a decade on the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College, after which he led the Juilliard School from 1945 to 1962. After leaving Juilliard, he assumed the presidency of Lincoln Center, then under construction as Manhattan's new center for the performing arts.

inspiration from the Revolutionary era

In the late 1930s Schuman became interested in the music of William Billings, a Revolutionary War-era American composer. Schuman was greatly impacted while directing the Sarah Lawrence College Chorus in three Billings hymns: "Be Glad Then,

America," "When Jesus Wept" and "Chester." Wanting to explore the possibilities in the 18th-century tunes, he adapted them into a *William Billings Overture* in 1943, but was never fully satisfied with the piece.

In 1956, the Russian-born orchestral conductor André Kostelanetz asked Schuman for a new work: light in character, with an American background. Schuman proposed reworking and expanding the *Billings Overture* into a three-movement suite. Kostelanetz agreed enthusiastically and conducted the premiere in Miami on October 28, 1956. Schuman wrote an extended note for the inaugural performances; his introductory text follows.

"William Billings (1746-1800) is a major figure in the history of American music. The works of this dynamic composer capture the spirit of sinewy ruggedness, deep religiosity and patriotic fervor that we associate with the Revolutionary period. Despite the undeniable crudities and technical shortcomings of his music, its appeal, even today, is forceful and moving. I am not alone among American composers who feel an identity with Billings and it is this sense of identity which accounts for my use of his music as a point of departure. These pieces do not constitute a 'fantasy' on themes of Billings, nor 'variations' on his themes, but rather a fusion of styles and musical language."

In its new guise, and now retitled *New England Triptych*, the work became so successful that Schuman withdrew the *William Billings Overture*. In 1958, he rewrote the *Chester* movement for concert band, expanding it from three to six minutes. Eventually he arranged the first two movements for band as well.

optimistic portraits of America

During the 1950s Schuman's other music had been veering dark and intellectual. This piece marked a decisive change: bright, energetic, upbeat and optimistic.


be glad then, America. A timpani solo opens *Be Glad Then, America*, ceding to the strings, and growing to full orchestra. Listeners familiar with John Williams will hear pre-echoes of his scores to action and adventure films—but Schuman's marvelous writing predates those heart-pumping themes. He captures the military flavor and idealism of young patriots determined to pursue their freedom.

when Jesus wept. The second movement is structured as a round. This time the tenor drum opens, establishing the funeral march tempo. Bassoon and oboe share the initial statement of the hymn. Schuman warms his free iterations with magical use of the strings, gently weaving countermelodies together with Billings' theme. Oboe and bassoon return to their solo cameos, strings offer a final chorale phrase, and tenor drum has the last word.

Chester. The finale opens with a woodwind chorale that serves as a slow introduction. The ensuing *Allegro vivo* is a march in double time, a reminder that America's Continental Army adopted Billings' hymn as a marching song. The high winds offer the bugler's call to arms. Strings buzz with infantry energy. Flutes, horns and trumpets all have their turns at fanfares. Snare drum keeps crisp time. The energy is irrepressible, the victory assured.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum, cymbals and strings

Program note by **Laurie Shulman** ©2018. First North American Serial Rights Only.



Steve Heitzeg
Born: October 15, 1959,
 Albert Lea, Minnesota;
 now living in
 St. Paul, Minnesota

***American Nomad, for
 Trumpet and Orchestra***
Premiered: April 30, 2015

Steve Heitzeg grew up on his family's dairy farm in south central Minnesota, which partially accounts for his many works written in celebration of the natural world. Heitzeg's extensive catalogue has seen performances by such leading orchestras and ensembles as the Atlanta Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, VocalEssence, Chanticleer and Dale Warland Singers, as well as the Minnesota Orchestra.

The philosophy that guides Heitzeg's musical spirit is "the peaceful coexistence of all species through music," through which he addresses social and ecological issues. "We are all native to the earth," he says, "and this is the origin of music—chords of humanity, animal chants, oceanic and aquatic arias, mountainous percussion, insect inventions, passacaglias of plants, symphonies of sky." Many of his titles attest to his interest in and concern for the nature around us, such as *What the River Says*, *Leaf Songs*, *Voice of the Everglades* and *Endangered*.

Since 1995 Minnesota Orchestra has commissioned and/or premiered a considerable variety of Heitzeg's works, ranging from *On the Day You Were Born*, based on the book by Debra Frasier, to *Blue Liberty*, *We Are Met at Gettysburg*, *Wounded Fields*, *Together (Divided We Are Nothing)*, *The Tin Forest* and *Now We Start the Great Round*. Among his recent projects are the chamber work

earthbird, commissioned and premiered by the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota; *Refugee (Variations on Immigration)*, premiered by soprano Anna Christofaro and pianist Mary Jo Gothmann; and *Fanfare for a Weapon-Free World*, commissioned by the Gustavus Symphony Orchestra for its 2020 international tour.

"a sonic meditation across the nation"

American Nomad was commissioned by Paul and Margot Grangaard for tonight's soloist, Charles Lazarus, to whom it is also dedicated, and who premiered the work with the Orchestra on April 10, 2015. Paul Grangaard is a former Orchestra Board member and a trumpet aficionado.

The work, the composer writes, "is intended as a sonic meditation across the nation—starting in New York City, then moving through the South, the Great Plains and North, and on to the West and California. I wanted to create a series of soundscapes in the concerto that depict various American landscapes: the Statue of Liberty, fields across America, Joshua Tree National Park, the high desert, Redwood trees, the Golden Gate Bridge and the Pacific Ocean at the California coast."

The work calls for standard orchestral forces, but with a greatly expanded percussion section. Heitzeg specifies that it should include two beach stones from the Pacific Ocean, a singing bowl, two small fallen branches from a Joshua Tree, two small fallen pieces of bark from a California Fan Palm, two New York City subway track spikes and an original iron armature bar from the Statue of Liberty. The composer has made slight revisions since the work's 2015 premiere: the version performed this week includes guitar and, in the final movement, steel from the Golden Gate Bridge.

Why the title? "Perhaps," Heitzeg says, "because as I composed the piece I was reflecting on what it means to be an American in the world today; the word 'nomad' resonated with me because we are all travelers on this beautiful planet. The soloist becomes a sort of troubadour, reporting to us sonically about the travels, the people and the land. The soloist is a kind of people's trumpeter: a messenger sounding alarm, singing praise and trumpeting for hope and justice. Symphonies and concertos can be metaphors for the larger world—functioning in a diverse sonic microcosm of sounds that are shaped to portray the inner and outside world, thereby, perhaps, positively changing both."

notes from the composer

The composer has prepared the following descriptions of the work's three movements:

Avenue of the Americas (for those without a home). On the most literal level, this movement takes its name from the street in New

York, which runs from Canal Street up to Malcolm X Boulevard in Harlem. But the title also alludes to the notion of how immigrants come to America. What is a person’s avenue to America? What were our ancestors’ routes—Ellis Island or the slave ship? The subtitle honors those who have struggled and continue to struggle, especially refugees and asylum seekers, trying to fulfill the dream America can offer.

The trumpet’s opening fanfare is a call and response. What follows is a series of variations on this theme that keep changing as a metaphor for the altering moods of the street and its sounds as you travel the avenue. Influenced by Gershwin’s *An American in Paris*, in which he included taxi horns from Paris in the piece, I’ve included an armature bar from the Statue of Liberty and two New York City subway track spikes to evoke the sounds of Manhattan, with the idea that the concerto is a kind of *An American in the World*. Through mixed meter rhythms, dance-infused themes and shifting sonorities, I hope to convey the diversity that makes New York City and America—a nation of immigrants—so remarkable. The indigenous American Indian perspective is acknowledged when the percussionists play the bass drum in powwow style (turned on its side horizontally).

Little Hymn to the Fields. The second movement is an elegy for solo trumpet and strings, paying tribute to the beauty of both wild and farm fields and honoring those who have toiled or lost their lives in other fields across America—battle fields, cotton fields, migrant fields.

Trip (Where the Chords Have No Name). The final movement addresses notions of the word “trip”: boat trip and post-Vietnam War refugees, road trip through the high desert, hippie trip, and the more Zen idea of the trip that is life itself. The opening scherzo has the trumpet playing over modal jazz chords in the orchestra to evoke the high winds of the Mojave Desert. Angular lines and harsh chords follow to signify the struggle of the various trips. The next section is a processional in protest of the poaching of Redwood tree burls. With winding and lyrical lines, it calls for the percussionists to play beach stones from the Pacific Ocean and fallen branches from a Joshua tree. The following “High Desert Blues” is replete with cuica drum, finger snaps, claves and solo trumpet improvisation.

On a 2014 trip to Palm Springs, California with my wife Gwen and our daughter Zadie, I was taken with the vast, surreal landscape of Joshua Tree National Park. The concerto’s penultimate section, “Ballad for the Joshua Trees (remembering Gram Parsons),” is a tribute to the singer-guitarist and the beautiful loneliness of the high desert. Many famous rock musicians have been drawn to the area surrounding Joshua Tree National Park. In one of the wildest stories in rock music history, Gram Parsons’ body was

burned in a funeral pyre in the park. The spot remains a pilgrimage site.

This section opens with the brass and woodwind sections whistling the main theme while the strings and crystal singing bowl create a mirage-like effect. The solo trumpet takes up the melody with high strings in the distance. Percussionists signal the close of the concerto with steel from the Golden Gate Bridge and a reprise of the Statue of Liberty armature bar.

Instrumentation: solo trumpet with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, armature bar from the Statue of Liberty, 2 small (fallen) pieces of bark from a California Fan Palm, bass drum, 2 beach stones from the Pacific Ocean, 2 bongos, 2 small (fallen) branches from a Joshua Tree, cajón drum, claves, cuica drum, crystal singing bowl, gourd rattle, guiro, hand cymbals, 3 hand drums, maracas, 2 New York City subway track spikes, 2 sandpaper blocks, snare drum, steel from the Golden Gate Bridge, small stone, tambourine, tamtam, timbales, tom-toms, wood block, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, xylophone, guitar and strings

Special thanks to the Statute of Liberty Ellis Island Ambassadors, Richard Stocks, founder and CEO, for loan of the iron armature bar from the Statue of Liberty, an original part of the statue designed by Gustave Eiffel, that had been removed during the 1984 restoration. Steel from the Golden Gate Bridge provided by Paolo Cosulich-Schwartz, Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District, and Darren McVeigh, ironworker.

Program note by **Robert Markow**.

	Florence Beatrice Price
	Born: April 9, 1887 Little Rock, Arkansas
	Died: June 3, 1953, Chicago, Illinois
Symphony No. 1 in E minor Premiered: June 15, 1933	

As the calendar turns from 2018—which many called the “year of the woman”—to 2019, composer Florence Price is taking a proud place. She achieved renown in the 1930s along with her contemporaries William Grant Still and William Dawson; collectively, they are the principal classical music figures of the Harlem Renaissance. Although Price was the best-known female African American composer in the U.S. from 1930 to 1950, her work fell into obscurity after her death, in part because many of her compositions were thought lost. A trove of manuscripts

surfaced in 1980, helping to draw attention to Price's achievements. Today, her music is getting a considerable amount of well-deserved attention. Her First Symphony has an especially proud history: it was the first symphony by an African American woman to be performed by a major American orchestra.

a groundbreaking composer

Price's personal story is remarkable. She performed in public at age 4 and published her first composition when she was 11. Accepted to New England Conservatory at 16, she studied composition, piano and organ. After graduating, she taught in Little Rock and Atlanta for several years, then left the South for Chicago, pursuing additional study at Chicago Musical College and the American Conservatory.

Price was neither shy nor lacking in ambition. Her confidence had been boosted by recognition and awards for some of her compositions in the 1920s. In 1932, she submitted two orchestral works and two piano pieces to the Rodman Wanamaker Competition, which sought new music from African American composers. *All four of Price's scores won awards*, and her Symphony in E minor—the first of her four symphonies—garnered first prize. Chicago Symphony conductor Frederick Stock took note and premiered the symphony in June 1933 as one of the CSO's first concerts at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. Price's career had been launched.

the music: an affirmation of heritage

In a broad sense, Price's style is neo-romantic and rooted in the classical symphonic tradition. She shows a secure hand with traditional harmony and orchestral color, particularly in her imaginative use of woodwinds and the balance between and among instrumental sections.

However, there are many additional elements at play in her First Symphony. Price specifically sought to affirm black cultural heritage in this music, as her biographer Rae Linda Brown has noted: "Her primary goal...was to feature [African American] folk materials: spiritual-like themes, characteristic dance music, cross-rhythms, call-and-response organizational procedures, dominance of a percussive, polyrhythmic approach to music, off-beat phrasing of melodic accents, and the inclusion of environmental factors such as hand-clapping and foot-tapping."

allegro ma non troppo. The influence of Antonín Dvořák is also apparent from the First Symphony's opening measures; it is surely no coincidence that the work shares the key of E-minor with the *New World* Symphony. This movement favors motto rhythms (such as short-long-short-long-long), yet varies them enough to sustain listener interest. She introduces a delicious series of fleeting solos in the development. The movement closes

with an *Andante maestoso* section, returning to the home tonality of E minor with full orchestra, cymbal crashes and an uncanny summing up of thematic unity.

largo, maestoso. The slow movement opens with a brass chorale, complemented only by timpani and African drum. The rhythmic structure is unusual: five-bar phrases answered by a two-bar woodwind response. Price's penchant for antiphonal writing emerges in this movement; she uses orchestral sections in sonic blocks. The strings introduce a new idea that is again reminiscent of Dvořák—but they are silent or relegated to the background for a considerable portion of this movement. A beautiful passage features extended woodwind solos, gently supported by brass. Toward the end, the brass chorale returns with a complement of clarinet embroidery and cathedral chimes, taking up the two-bar response. Full orchestra closes in a final statement of the chorale.

juba dance. Her third movement, *Juba Dance*, takes its name from an African dance that involves stomping and clapping. Its descendants in this country include ragtime and cakewalk. Within the context of the First Symphony, it functions as a foot-tapper of a scherzo, bubbling over with syncopations, countermelodies and sassy slide-whistles. Price's ideas unfold as a series of variants largely achieved through color. She allocates a primary theme to one instrument or section, with others embellishing in complementary motives. The ingredients meld in good-natured fun.

finale. The finale is a tarantella thematically related to the first movement. Frequent short sections are repeated, rather like a rondo in alternation. Rhythmic strings—sometimes bowed, elsewhere pizzicato—keep the momentum hurtling forward. Despite the minor mode, this is music of resolute good cheer. Once again, Price dazzles us with her facility in showcasing individual woodwinds and brass, and the rapid passing of material among the strings. The *prestissimo* coda is a delirious rush.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 piccolos, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, large and small African drums, triangle, wind whistle, cathedral chimes, glockenspiel, celesta and strings

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