

MADE IN AMERICA (2004)

JOAN TOWER (1938 -)

Grammy award-winning composer, pianist, and conductor, whom the *New Yorker* heralded as “one of the most successful woman composers of all time,” Joan Tower spent nine years of her childhood in Bolivia. Upon returning to the United States, she was struck by the freedoms, advantages, and privileges that we so often take for granted. *America the Beautiful* came to mind as she composed this work. Its tune runs throughout this piece as it competes with Tower’s idea of what is inside that tune. The familiar rhythm of long-short-short and the rising motive is varied with unfamiliar elements including an extended opposing downward tension by nasal muted trumpets and oboes. The rest of the work takes off on those fragments. The climactic agenda of the piece grows while juxtaposed with extended soft segments. According to Tower, the unsettling tension that is evident in *Made in America* unconsciously ended up representing the struggle of keeping America beautiful.

Made in America was commissioned by a consortium of 65 orchestras partnering with the American Symphony Orchestra League, Meet the Composer, and the Ford Motor Company and was played in all 50 states in an 18 month period in 2006 and 2007. The Nashville Symphony’s recording of the piece resulted in three Grammy Awards in 2008.

WORLD EVENTS:

Summer Olympics are held in Greece, Ronald Reagan dies, Mark Zuckerberg launches Facebook from his Harvard dorm room

FIRST PERFORMANCE:

October 2005, Glen Falls, New York

MOST RECENT TSO PERFORMANCE:

TSO Premiere

DREAMSCAPE - CONCERTO FOR OBOE AND ORCHESTRA (2014)

ALYSSA MORRIS (1984 -)

Professor of oboe and music theory at Kansas State University, Alyssa Morris composed this work on a commission by William and Lois Johnson. The four movements represent four different dreams:

- ***Falling Asleep and Chase*** – This dream is a familiar one that is self-explanatory.
- ***What?*** – This strange dream is depicted with abnormalities mixed into a “normal” waltz.
- ***Innuendo*** – A love scene.
- ***Nightmare and Awakening*** – Beginning with the “dreamer’s motive” heard in the first movement, the dreamer struggles to awaken but falls deeper asleep as a nightmare commences. The tension is relieved when the orchestra stops and the oboe states a cadenza that awakens the dreamer with a return to the opening motive, this time with optimism.

WORLD EVENTS:

President Obama meets with the Dalai Lama, Revolution in Ukraine, Robin Williams dies

FIRST PERFORMANCE:

February 27, 2014, Boston, Jeralee Johnson, soloist

MOST RECENT TSO PERFORMANCE:

TSO Premiere

SYMPHONY NO. 9 IN E MINOR, OPUS 95, "FROM THE NEW WORLD" (1893) ANTONIN DVORAK (1841 - 1904)

Despite his aversion to travel, Dvorak sailed to America in 1892 and spent the better part of three years as head of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. His time teaching and composing in America broadened his outlook and gave him financial security. The writing of this symphony took place in the Dvorak's five room apartment on East 17th Street, surrounded by his children and chattering birds. Large parts of the work were orchestrated in Spillville, Iowa, where he spent his summers in a large Czech colony, free to dispense with his struggle with English.

Each of the symphony's movements is preceded by an introduction, an uncommon symphonic treatment. In the opening movement a bold fanfare for two horns precedes a melody that suggests *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* in the flute. The principal theme of the second movement is the haunting English horn melody, inspired by Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, later coopted by a student in the choral melody *Goin' Home*. Although sources of melodic material remain clouded in conflicting theories, the animated scherzo, with two trios, has been likened to an Indian dance with chanting. In the finale, after its introduction, the first theme is announced in the brass against fortissimo chords. In a shift of gears, the work surprisingly ends in triumphant E Major, with the final chord reserved for the winds alone.

Dvorak counseled composers to explore native sources for fresh stimuli, but never advocated the use of whole folk songs. He encouraged the reflecting of such material without direct citation. Although it is clear that he was

very interested in African American and Native American music, the title *From the New World* was added just prior to submitting the work and Dvorak said that it merely signified "impressions and greetings from the New World." He wrote to a conductor programming the piece in 1900, "Leave out the nonsense about my having made use of American melodies. I have only composed in the spirit of such American national melodies."

The premiere was a triumph, following a public rehearsal the day before that had generated great enthusiasm, and the work remains among the most beloved of symphonies

WORLD EVENTS:

Katherine Lee Bates writes "America the Beautiful", New Zealand is the first country to grant all women the right to vote, Tchaikovsky dies

FIRST PERFORMANCE:

December 16, 1893, New York

MOST RECENT TSO PERFORMANCE:

February 9, 2008

ALYSSA MORRIS has delighted audiences around the world with her “soulful” and “exceptional” musicianship (Fanfare Magazine). Dr. Morris serves as Assistant Professor of Oboe at Kansas State University and as the principal oboist of the Topeka Symphony Orchestra. She has appeared as a soloist in venues throughout the United States, Scandinavia, the British Isles, and Western Europe. She performed as concerto soloist in the Kennedy Center, and as a recitalist at the 2014, 2016, and 2018 International Double Reed (IDRS) Conventions in New York City, Columbus, Georgia, and Granada, Spain. Dr. Morris has served as principal oboist of the Wichita Grand Opera from 2017- present, has previously held the position of Associate Principal Oboe in the Richmond (IN) Symphony Orchestra, and second oboe in the Utah Wind Symphony. She has additionally performed with the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, the Cincinnati Bach Ensemble, the Kentucky Symphony Orchestra, the Utah Baroque Ensemble, and the Utah Lyric Opera. Her recent CD album release via MSR Classics, “A Higher Place,” has been hailed by American Record Guide as “gorgeous and thoughtful” with “stunning” performances, “unmistakable...virtuosity” and “deft emotional timing.”

Regarding her equally expansive work as a composer, the American Record Guide writes that Dr. Morris’s music “has charm, piquancy, verve, and most importantly, substance.” Her chamber music is performed extensively around the world, and has been presented at several IDRS Conventions, the International Clarinet Association’s ClarinetFest, the National Flute Association Convention, and the Society of Composers Inc. National Convention. Dr. Morris is a 2019 Barlow Composition Commission Award Winner. She has additionally been commissioned to write music for the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, the Richmond (IN) Symphony Orchestra, the U.S. Air Force Woodwind Quintet, and Carolyn Hove (principal English horn of the Los Angeles Philharmonic) to name a few. Dr. Morris’s music has been recorded on the Equilibrium, Centaur, Blue Griffin, and MSR Classics labels, and her compositions are published by TrevCo Music Publishing.

Dr. Morris earned her BM and MM degrees at Brigham Young University, where she studied with Dr. GERALYN GIOVANNETTI. She earned her DMA at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music where she studied with Dr. MARK OSTOICH.

