

SPRING YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERT

Kyle Knox, Conductor

# Symphony No.



***CURRICULUM GUIDE***

MADISON  
**SYMPHONY**  
ORCHESTRA  
JOHN DEMAIN | MUSIC DIRECTOR

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# Program



## **SYMPHONY NO. 9**

STORIES OF NINTH SYMPHONIES  
AND BEYOND...

Kyle Knox, Conductor

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2020  
OVERTURE HALL  
10:00 A.M.

### **ANTONIN DVORAK (1841-1904)**

**Slavonic Dances, Op. 46**

**No. 1 in C Major (Furiant)**

**No. 3 in A flat Major (Polka)**

**No. 8 in G minor (Furiant)**

**Note: One or two movements will be performed from the three above**

### **BOLZ YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION WINNERS TBD**

### **DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)**

**Symphony No. 5**

**Note: excerpts**

### **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)**

**Symphony No. 9**

**Note: excerpts**

### **DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)**

**Symphony No. 9**

**I. Allegro**

**IV. Largo**

**V. Allegretto - Allegro**



# The Orchestra



Speaking of symphonies...The word symphony can be used in two ways—you could say “I’m going to listen to the Madison Symphony Orchestra” or you could say “They are playing Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony”. So - what’s the difference? A symphony can be a group of musicians, with strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion, led by a conductor. A symphony can also be a piece of music written for orchestra, usually with three or four different sections or “movements.”

Symphony orchestras have existed from very early in history. The modern orchestra has been around for about 250 years. Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frederick Handel were some of the earliest composers to write for the symphony orchestra in the early 18th century. Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart later enlarged and further developed the ensemble. A symphony orchestra, like the Madison Symphony Orchestra, has at least 90 musicians.

Under the artistic leadership of Music Director John DeMain (hailed as “a gifted orchestra builder” by The New York Times), the Madison Symphony Orchestra has grown to be one of America’s leading regional orchestras. Now in its 94th season, the MSO presents top-tier guest artists from around the world and brings the joy of music to more than 23,000 children and adults annually through award-winning Education and Community Engagement programs. The mission of the Madison Symphony Orchestra is to produce high quality concerts of orchestral, instrumental, vocal, and choral music, to educate and entertain audiences of all ages in the Madison area and beyond, and to advocate music as a universal language of expression and understanding.

# Conductor Kyle Knox

Kyle Knox took over the dual positions of Music Director of WYSO and Associate Conductor of the Madison Symphony Orchestra in the 2018-2019 season. Past and upcoming conducting credits include Mark Adamo's *Little Women* with Madison Opera, *Albert Herring*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and *Transformations* with UW Opera, Madison Symphony's 2017 Concert on the Green, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Gondoliers* and *H.M.S. Pinafore* with Madison Savoyards, as well as UW Music Clinic's High School Honors Orchestra. Other concerts include *Carousel*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *Sweeney Todd* (2018) with Middleton Players Theatre, Jon Deak's *The Passion of Scrooge* with Oakwood Chamber Players, as well as regular appearances with the Middleton Community Orchestra. He was formerly a clarinetist with the Milwaukee Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, and Philadelphia Orchestras, and on faculty at UW-Milwaukee. Festival credits include Tanglewood, Spoleto (Italy), Santa Fe Chamber Music, and Bowdoin, among others. His debut album, the first commercial recording of Conrad Susa's chamber opera *Transformations*, was released in the summer of 2018 on iTunes. He holds degrees from Juilliard and UW-Madison.





# Ninth Symphonies...

Nature vs. nurture is that ongoing debate... and it applies to composers, too. Are compositions simply products of the environment and the time in which they were written? Or do they stem uniquely from the composer him/herself? Perhaps the product is a blend of both. This program explores the creation of music and the influences along the way - from the political scene and key figures past and present to other art forms and key ideas at the time. All of this and more seems to feed into the music we uphold as unique to the composer...

## **What do you think?**

**1) Think of what you create in your life (self image, hobbies, school work, etc.).**

**How are your creations influenced by the world around you?**

**2) Why do you think it's important as a student performer to learn about the context of the pieces you play?**

**3) Think of your favorite piece of music. What influenced the artist who created it?**

One of the influencing ideas around the ninth symphony of Shostakovich was the particular importance and expectation surrounding ninth symphonies of composers who had written before him. One such idea was "The Curse of the Ninth." The Curse of the Ninth is the belief that a composer will die after completing their ninth symphony. It somehow implies that composers cannot write more than nine symphonies and that the ninth will be their greatest and their last.

It all started with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the epic choral symphony, which proved to be his last. He passed away a few years after the premiere, unable to finish a tenth symphony. Several composers who followed him, including Schubert, Dvořák and Vaughan Williams, also died after their ninth symphonies were finished.

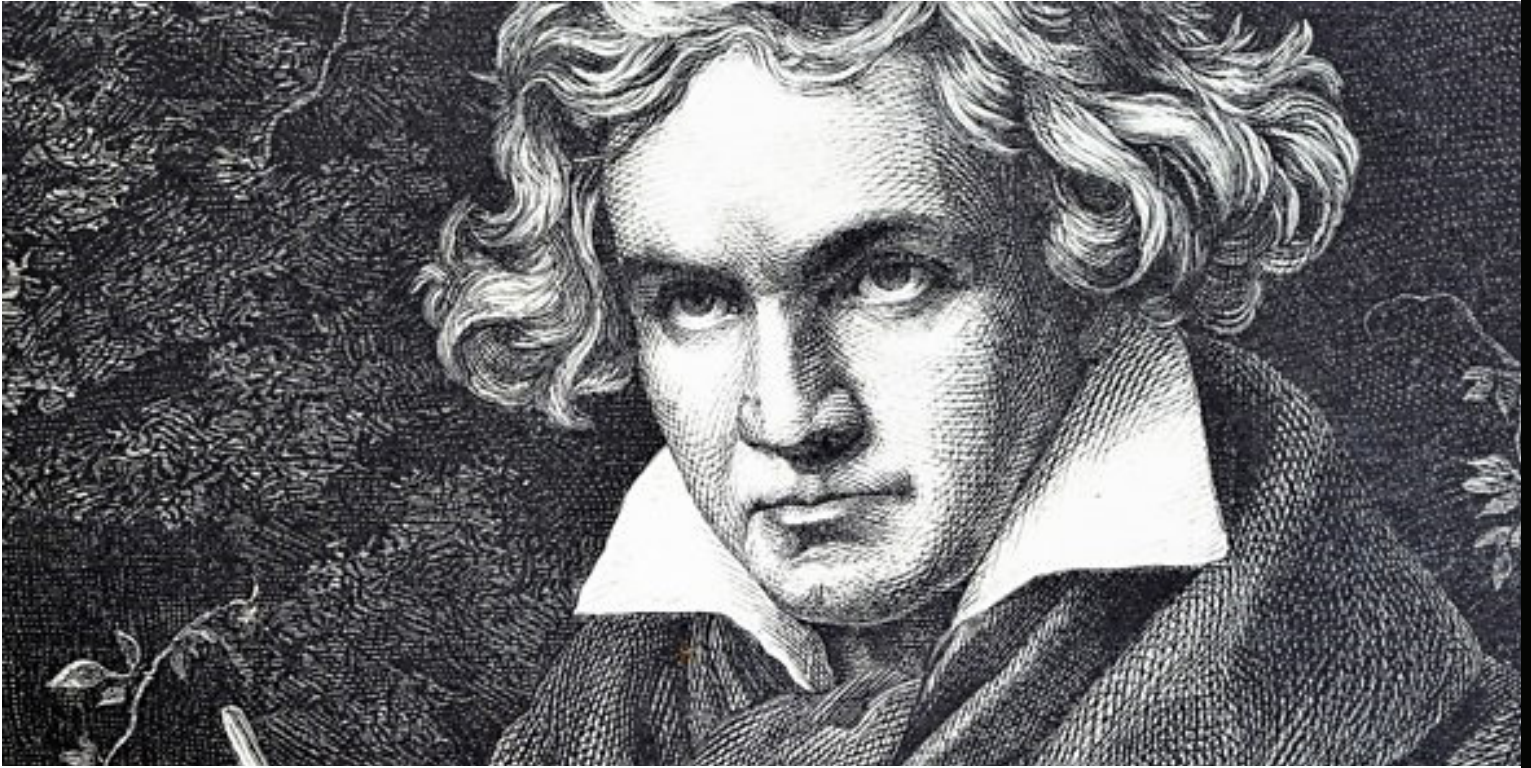
Gustav Mahler was one of the first to believe in a superstition surrounding ninth symphonies. He developed an obsession with the curse and after he completed his eighth symphony, Mahler came up with a clever plan to beat it. He wrote a piece of symphonic music that he named *Das Lied von der Erde*, refusing to actually call it a symphony. Thinking he had beaten the curse, he finished his ninth symphony and started working on his tenth when he contracted pneumonia and died, apparently proving the superstition correct.

Antonín Dvořák's popular ninth symphony, "From the New World," was the last symphony Dvořák would ever compose. It was billed as his fifth at the time of its premiere but four earlier symphonies were discovered after his death which led to the "New World" being labeled as the ninth.

The fact remains that there are many composers who have written more than nine symphonies. The Curse of the Ninth only makes sense if you concentrate on a small number of 19th and 20th century composers, omitting composers like Shostakovich who wrote 15 symphonies. Before Beethoven's time, the most famous Classical composers wrote far more symphonies, including Mozart who composed 41 symphonies and Haydn who wrote a whopping 104, more if you include the unnumbered ones. The Curse of the Ninth makes a great story but it is best to remember that it is simply a superstition in the history of classical music.

# Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827)



Ludwig van Beethoven was a German composer and pianist. During his short lifetime, he composed nine symphonies, along with several piano sonatas, string quartets, chamber music, and even opera. His work continued to mature with time and is usually divided into the early, middle, and late periods. Despite being one of the most influential composers of the Classical period, Beethoven suffered from hearing loss and was nearly completely deaf by the time he wrote his most mature works. But he never stopped composing. Beethoven is considered one of the most important composers ever, and his 250th birthday is celebrated in 2020! Beethoven expanded the symphony from the Classical idea of Haydn and Mozart into the larger, more dramatic expression that would inspire composers of the Romantic period and beyond.

Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, nicknamed the Choral Symphony, holds a pivotal place in the history of music and is widely viewed as Beethoven's greatest composition. Weaving themes of the Enlightenment into his work and tracing a path from darkness to light, the work is remarkable not only for its grandness of scale but especially for its the final movement, which includes a full chorus and vocal soloists who sing a setting of Friedrich Schiller's poem "An die Freude", the famous "Ode to Joy". Beethoven had long wanted to set the poem to music for its themes of freedom and brotherhood. Schiller's famous words state that in a new age the old ways will no longer divide people and that "all men shall become brothers." With its universal message, the piece has been used to mark monumental public occasions throughout history, most recently at the Olympic ceremonies, during the fall of the Berlin Wall, and as the anthem of the European Union.

# Antonín Dvořák

(1841-1904)



Antonín Dvořák was born as the first of nine children in what is now the Czech Republic, but at the time was Bohemia, a part of the vast Austrian Empire. Although Dvořák was expected to work in the family business as a butcher, Dvořák's parents recognized his musical talent early on, and in 1847 enrolled him in the village school where he received his earliest musical training. At the age of 12, Dvořák moved to Zlonice in order to study German, harmony, piano, and organ. There, Dvořák wrote his first compositions, polkas, and studied German with his music teacher, Antonin Liehmann. Dvořák then moved to Prague and studied at the Institute for Church Music. In the meantime, he played in the Bohemian Provisional Theater Orchestra and in various inns, while supplementing his meager wage with a few private pupils. Throughout the 1860s he played viola in the Bohemian Provisional Theater Orchestra, which from 1866 was conducted by Bedrich Smetana. From 1892 to 1895, Dvořák lived in the United States and was the director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. He then returned to the Czech Republic, where he taught at a music conservatory in Prague, and continued with his composition until his death in 1904.

The Slavonic Dances are a series of 16 orchestral pieces composed by Antonín Dvořák in 1878 and 1886 and published in two sets as Opus 46 and Opus 72 respectively. They were written when Johannes Brahms introduced Dvořák to his own music publisher, Fritz Simrock. After some time, Simrock requested for Dvořák to write a series of dances similar to Brahms' Hungarian Dances, which had been well received. Dvořák's Slavonic Dances were written originally for piano for four hands, or in other words, a piano duet with both players playing on the same piano.



Whereas Brahms made use of actual Hungarian folk melodies, Dvořák only made use of the characteristic rhythms of Slavic folk music. The melodies are entirely his own. The pieces, lively and overtly nationalistic, were well received at the time and established Dvořák's international reputation. Today they are among the composer's most memorable works.

Characteristic of Dvořák's Slavonic Dances are changes in meter, or shifts in the basic rhythm and pulse of the music. This can create an offsetting feel to those listening to the music, as it's hard to pin down when the "down-beat" or the first beat of the measure is. Take for example some of the opening bars of Slavonic Dance No. 1 in C Major. The first line and the first two measures of the second line are in an easy, swinging triple meter, with a waltz-like feel. It's easy to tell that the emphasis is naturally on the first beat of each measure.



In the third bar of the second line, beginning in the new phrase, the meter changes, though the time signature is still 3/4. It's still in triple meter, but now we feel three larger beats over two measures instead of three beats within one measure.

Another characteristic of Dvořák's Slavonic Dances is the way he changes quickly from a major key to a minor key. A key is a group of notes or pitches that make up a scale and gives a piece its character and color. Major and minor keys have slight differences in pitches that give them each their own flavor. Major keys are happy sounding, bright, and upbeat. Characteristic of a minor key is a somber and darker sound.

Dvořák's Dance No. 8 changes key constantly. Take the first phrase for example. The first four bars are in a bold G minor, beginning the entire piece with a chord of that key. At the beginning of the measure 5, Dvořák switches to the parallel major of G minor, G major, by simply raising the B flat to a B natural. He continues this pattern again and again over the course of the piece.



By the way, what does "Slavonic" mean? The word "Slavonic" means of, denoting or relating to the people who speak Slavic languages. Slavic languages make up the language group spoken by certain countries in Eastern Europe.

Did you know that at the turn of the 21st century it was estimated that 315 million people spoke Slavic languages? That's nearly the population of the entire United States!

A few of these countries are Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Slovenia, and Bulgaria.

# Dmitri Shostakovich

(1906-1975)



Dmitri Shostakovich was the son of musical and intellectual parents. His mother served as his first piano teacher starting at the age of nine and shortly thereafter he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory to nurture his musical talents. For his graduation from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, at the age of nineteen, he composed his Symphony No. 1. His initial compositions included works for solo piano and full orchestra. It was not until the performance of his Fifth Symphony that he came to the forefront of Soviet music. Shostakovich taught at the Moscow Conservatory and received numerous prizes for his contributions to Soviet culture, including the Stalin and Lenin Prizes.

Alongside of his success, Shostakovich confronted challenges in his musical life. Due to criticism from the Soviet regime, Shostakovich often wrote on two planes: a private first level which allowed his creativity to flow freely and a second level in which he wrote within the confines of the conservative Soviet ideology.

Shostakovich adopted the creative idea that often used the notes D - Eb - C - B as a musical signature. Using a German alphabet, the notes stand for D. Sch. He used this idea in several different works, including his Symphony No. 10.

Shostakovich's entire creative career was under the Soviet System of the U.S.S.R. and he was criticized by them for his music. This unavoidably influenced his compositional work. Government officials criticized Shostakovich for creating "anti-people art," and other vague offences, and even looked at the keys he used in his music to see whether he wrote more often in major keys or minor keys - to see whether he was "optimistic" or "pessimistic."

At the same time in the United States, similar allegations of “un-American” activities were discussed in the U.S. Senate, led by Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy. What activities do you think might have been considered “un-American”?

In the spring of 1945 as the U.S.S.R. was nearing victory in World War II, there was pressure on Shostakovich to compose a grandiose piece that would glorify Stalin’s regime. Having been terrorized by that regime, Shostakovich was not particularly willing to comply, but open defiance was impossible. He led everyone to believe that he was working on “a symphony of victory with a song of praise.” He hinted that it would be a choral symphony but did not wish to invite comparison with any other choral ninth symphony (Beethoven’s Ninth). His Seventh and Eight Symphonies had been monumental works, and the expectation was that the Ninth would be even bigger. The symphony he actually wrote could not have been more different. It was small in scale and full of humor instead of heroism.

In a concert tribute to Shostakovich, Leonard Bernstein elaborated on Shostakovich’s marvelous sense of humor, the most amusing of his works being the Ninth Symphony:

**“This Ninth Symphony by Shostakovich is rather like a witty comedy in the theatre, where you are treated to one joke after another—puns, wisecracks, punchlines, surprises, twisteros—but somehow all adding up to a work of art. Now almost every symphony has some kind of joke in it: Even the most serious symphony by Beethoven or Mahler has at least one movement (usually the scherzo) which is humorous—maybe not out-and-out comical, but satirical, or bitter, or mocking, or something. But this whole symphony by Shostakovich is all humorous, every minute and every movement. It is all one big series of jokes.”**

**“The first and foremost joke is the very fact that it is his Ninth Symphony. You may well ask what’s so funny about that; well, I’ll tell you. That number nine is a magic number with composers; ever since Beethoven it has come to mean the crowning final output of a symphonic composer. Beethoven’s ninth, as you must know, is the huge symphonic monument of his whole lifetime—his last symphony. And since then, it’s become almost a tradition for a composer to crown his life with his ninth symphony. If you can reach number nine, it had better be a whopper, worthy of that magic number. ”**

**“But not Shostakovich. You see, he had just written two whoppers, number seven and number eight—both very long, very serious, very patriotic symphonies, and both having grown out of his wartime emotions. But now it was 1945, the war was over, and it was time for some comic relief from those two gigantic symphonies seven and eight. So out came number nine—a little number nine, and that in itself is a twisteroo.”**

**“But the real jokes begin with the music itself...”**

For two years, Soviet critics were divided about the Ninth, some calling it a delightful work, and others declaring that it “amounted to an unwarranted artistic vacation in momentous times when momentous works were called for.” In 1948, the Soviet government cracked down and banned many of the composer’s works. Shostakovich did not write another symphony until after Stalin’s death in 1953.



# National and State Standards

## National Core Arts Standards

MU:Pr6.1.8 (b) Demonstrate performance decorum (such as stage presence, attire, and behavior) and audience etiquette appropriate for venue, purpose, context, and style.

MU:Re7.2.8 (a) Compare how the elements of music and expressive qualities relate to the structure within programs of music.

MU:Re7.2.8 (b) Identify and compare the context of programs of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.

MU:Re9.1.8 Apply appropriate personally-developed criteria to evaluate musical works or performances.

MU:Cn10.0.8 Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

MU:Cn11.0.8 Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

## Wisconsin Standards for Music

MG2.P.19.h Illustrate how the setting, and elements of music, contribute to the context and expressive qualities of the music.

MG3.R.14.h Illustrate understanding of contrasts and similarities of expressive elements in artistic work through discussion and written reflections.

MG3.R.16.h Analyze, critique, and evaluate musical performances, recordings, and compositions using appropriate music terminology, theory, and technology.

MG3.R.17.h Demonstrate proper concert/audience etiquette for a variety of musical settings.

MG3.R.18.h Reflect upon and critique performances using grade-appropriate music vocabulary.

MG4.Cn.13.h Interpret the historical and cultural relationships between music and other disciplines.

MG4.Cn.14.h Explain the relationship between performer and audience using grade-appropriate music vocabulary.

MG4.Cn.15.h Analyze connections, similarities, and differences in a musical context.

MG4.Cn.16.h Identify how the influence of two of more cultural traditions impact the genre and style of a piece of music.

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*Sources for this guide include past Madison Symphony Orchestra Curriculum Guides. Other sources for the material included in this guide include the following: <https://leonardbernstein.com/lectures/television-scripts/young-peoples-concerts/birthday-tribute-to-shostakovich/>; <https://www.laphil.com/musicdb/pieces/4062/symphony-no-9/>; <https://houstonssymphony.org/shostakovich-symphony-9/>; <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/curse-of-the-ninth/>; <https://www.wqxr.org/story/how-curse-ninth-symphony-haunted-these-composers/>; <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5487727>; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Symphony-No-9-in-D-Minor>; <https://www.sfsymphony.org/Watch-Listen-Learn/Read-Program-Notes/Program-Notes/Beethoven-Symphony-No-9-in-D-minor;-Opus-125.aspx>.*



