Two Who Made the “New World”¹

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The Symphony “From the New World” is by now one of the most popular compositions in the canon, and can hardly be called a controversial work. Yet there have been lingering doubts about the work’s specifically American bona fides, and more than one hundred years after its premiere we do not actually know why Dvořák wrote the symphony when he did, and why he took such great pains to fill it with allusions to the music of Black Americans. This study aims to add a new piece to the puzzle, a hitherto unknown document which probably played a significant role in shaping Dvořák’s orientation. Once again, it is the writing of Kovařík which sheds light on the matter and in the process he leads us to a unlikely duo consisting of Dvořák’s greatest American nemesis, and a previously unidentified musician of both local and international reputation.

The Man Who Made the “New World“

In a passage from his recollections Kovařík explaining why Dvořák took some extra time preparing for his new work:

After the completion of the AMERICAN FLAG, a longer period elapsed before Master started a new work. It was usual for him to start work on a new composition immediately after he had completed the preceding one. This time, however, he took a little longer in preparing – and the reason was as follows:...One day Mr. James Gibbons Hunneker (sic), piano teacher at the National Conservatory, and also music reviewer for the music weekly MUSICAL COURIER, brought a cutting from some monthly for master to see, an essay on Negro songs, with a few “typical” Negro tunes reproduced. During his next visit, Mr. HUNNEKER asked for Master’s opinion. Did he think it possible to start a “national American” music founded on Negro melodies? Master told Mr. HUNNEKER, that he “believed this to be possible!” On the following day, the New York HERALD published a long article-unsigned-saying that Master declared that American Music should and must be built on the foundation of Negro songs, and that he himself was going to write the first work of this kind.

¹ This article would not have been possible without the help of many people. I would like to thank Judith Fiehler of the LOC for her help on several matters, and Jarmila Tauerová of the Dvořák Museum for her assistance. The most special thanks go to Pen Bogert of the Filson Club in Louisville, Kentucky who helped me to find Mildred Hill and played an important role in this project. I would like to thank three of my graduate students who were working for me as research assistants. Thomas Svatos helped confirm the hypothesis of this study by locating “Negro Music” at the Dvořák Museum at my suggestion, Diane Paige was responsible for helping me to locate several important sources, including “Negro Music” itself, and Rebecca Giacosie supplied information about the periodical, Music. Special thanks to Derek Katz, who gave the paper a thorough reading. Thanks also go to Michaela Laza and Christy Meister for their comments. Finally, I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Alan Houtchens, for bringing the paper to Prague, my student Thomas Svatos for reading it, and David Beveridge for performing the musical examples.
At first, it appears that because Kovařík conflated several events, (as he did several times in his writings) this evidence is almost worthless. Huneker’s visit must have been sometime in the late fall of 1892 or the winter of 1893, since The American Flag was completed at the beginning of January, while the article referred to in the Herald did not come out until May of 1893. Unless we imagine that Huneker went five months between visits, we might conclude that Kovařík simply mixed up Huneker with the famed “Yellow Journalist”, James Creelman, author of those Herald articles, which contained Dvořák’s views of race and music.2

There are at least two reasons, however, to take Kovařík’s account very seriously. First, by the time he wrote this passage, he truly disliked Huneker, viewing him as Dvořák’s enemy, much the way scholars and writers including Šourek, Burghauser, Škvorecký and most recently Mahler have configured him. He definitely would have remembered Huneker.

Second, and more significantly, Huneker makes a parallel claim in his review of the “New World”, published on December 20th, 1893:

The writer was the first to suggest to the composer the employment of characteristic negro melodies for symphony or suite, citing John Brockhoven’s charmingly conceived “Suite Creole”. This was a year ago.3

This corroborates Kovařík’s statement and fixes the time of Huneker’s visit in December or early January at the latest. Yet if did Huneker bring Dvořák an article with “specimen themes” what was it, and how can we be sure it had a significant impact on the composer’s activities?

“Negro Music“

The subject of African-American music was attracting more and more attention in the periodicals of the day, and there are several publications within a few years of Dvořák’s arrival, which featured musical examples. Considering that Huneker mentions the “Suite Creole” the first serious candidates would be a series of articles by George W. Cable on Creole music called “The Dance in Place Congo”, and “Creole Slave Songs” published in The Century Magazine in February and April 1886 respectively.4 Both these articles have many musical examples included and it is possible that some of these served as the basis for the now vanished work by Brockhoven mentioned by Huneker in his review. But these are

3 In The Musical Courier, December 20, 1893, P. 37–38. Also available in Dvořák and His World, P. 159–165.
4 Studies of African American music can be found in fair numbers in the last half of the 19th century. One of the earliest collections was presented by Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson in the June 1867 Atlantic Monthly. This is the same man who gave the “New World” address heard by Dvořák in October of 1893. In 1867 a book by W. F. Allen titled Slave Songs of the United States appeared (New York: A. Simpson). Near the time of Dvořák’s visit there were two larger collections published in New York: in 1891 Cabin and Plantation Songs (edited by Fenner and Rethburn) appeared, and in 1892 Uncle Remus and Friends (Edited by Chandler who did the Uncle Remus stories). The most important article in Century Magazine was the “Creole Slave Songs” by George W. Cable (Vol. XXXI, April, 1886, No. 6).
mostly melodies from Haiti, not from the United States. Besides, it is a little peculiar to think of Huneker trotting around town with back clippings of six year-old journals under his arm. These articles are unlikely to have been the ones in question.

There is a better candidate, however. One of the more interesting journals in the country, then in its first year, was *Music*, published in Chicago and edited by W. E. Matthews, a writer, pedagogue and critic. In December of 1892 *Music* published an article called “Negro Music” written by one Johann Tonsor of Louisville, Kentucky containing six musical examples. (This article is presented in its entirely in an appendix). The timing is perfect, and this article fits both Huneker’s and Kovařík’s descriptions better. The article on Creole music has many examples, and Kovařík refers to a few; both Kovařík and Huneker refer specifically to “Negro” songs, and the article in *Century* refers to French and Caribbean music; at the time such a distinction was quite important.

Yet it is only when we go to the beginning of the text that we realize how what a powerful impression this must have made on Dvořák:

To one who has passed his childhood in the South, no music in the world is so tenderly pathetic, so wildly, uncouthly melancholy, so fraught with an overpowering *heimweh*, as that of the negroes.

Even if Dvořák was not up to reading the English perfectly, it is certain that one word would certainly have caught his eye. Though excited by the United States, he was undeniably, even famously homesick for his own country. If he was moved by the article’s first sentence, the next two might have hit even deeper considering Dvořák’s fascination with myth and legend and his passion for the forgotten past:

When he hears one of these quaint old airs, he needs but to close his eyes and the potent spell of the music revivifies the past. Old memories, that he had deemed forgotten, rise as if obedient to the voice of enchantment.

Dvořák might also have been interested to hear a comparison with one of his favorite composers; “It is quite a common thing for the negro women to improvise words and music while they are at work, a sort of Wagnerian ‘melos’, or endless melody, as it were.”

If Dvořák was doubtless intrigued by the beginning of the article, both Dvořák and Huneker must have been charged by the challenge at the end where the author says:

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5 *Music* was a monthly journal that circulated from 1891 to 1902, edited and published by William Smythe Babcock Mathews, a notable journalist, pedagogue and organist in the late nineteenth century. Mathews clearly dictated the nature of the journal. The journal specialized in dealing with key issues of the day such as nationalism in music, American music, and music in American universities. Particularly notable were the regular reports on musical events at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in the 1890s, which included many reviews of works, including Dvořák’s, by Mathews himself. I am grateful to Rebecca Giacosie for compiling this material.


7 ibid. P. 119.

8 ibid.

9 ibid. 121.
When our American musical Messiah sees fit to be born he will then find ready to
his hand a mass of lyrical dramatic themes with which to construct a distinctively
American music.\(^\text{10}\)

From what Kovařík tells us, that was what Huneker really came to ask: “Huneker
asked for Master’s opinion – did he think it possible to start a ‘national American’
music founded on Negro melodies?”\(^\text{11}\)

The text in between the opening and the final peroration gives some particu-
lars about the contexts of various songs and provides some serious technical dis-
cussion:

Genuine negro music is invariably in a peculiar minor, which differs from the civi-
lized scale in two particulars; the sixth note of the gamut is omitted and the se-
venth is half a tone lower...When the blacks came into contact with the major scale
of the whites, they adopted it, preserving still the syncopated rhythm and the
omission of one note of the scale (the seventh in the major)...There is the same
omission of the seventh in Scotch music.\(^\text{12}\)

If some of this sounds familiar it is perhaps because Dvořák’s famous discussion of
“Negro” music in the New York Herald a few months later seems almost completely
based on it.\(^\text{13}\)

There is no doubt that this is the article that Huneker brought. This has been
confirmed by the recent discovery of a copy in the Dvořák Museum in Prague.\(^\text{14}\)
There is no way this obscure article from a Chicago journal could have gotten
among Dvořák’s possessions unless he had brought it with him. Further, it is in the
form of a “cutting” just as Kovařík described it. But there is more: written upside
down in the margin of the third page are the words “I love you Daddy” (Mám tě
moc rád tati) almost certainly in the hand of Dvořák’s youngest son Antonín, or
“Toník“. This not only implies that Dvořák read the article, but it provides us as
well with a charming image of domesticity. We can imagine Dvořák avidly scan-
ing the article, absorbed, and as he reads his young son Antonín, perhaps for fun
or to get some attention, writes the words in the margin.\(^\text{15}\)

We have noted several passages in the article which must have moved Dvořák
to action, but what of the songs themselves? Kovařík implies that the composer stu-
died them as preparation for the “New World“. What role could they have played
in the genesis of the symphony?

\(^{10}\) ibid. 121–22.
\(^{11}\) Of course, Huneker was not the only person trying to get Dvořák interested in Black music. Even
though the dates are somewhat fuzzy, it is quite likely that Jeannette Thurber, who was interested in the
creation of a specifically American music, also was exerting pressure in this area. The same can be said for
Henry Krehbiel, who was somewhat of an expert on the subject. However, we do not have any record of
this kind of contact between Krehbiel and Dvořák until several months later.
\(^{12}\) ibid. 120
\(^{13}\) See especially the interview-article in the New York Herald on December 15, 1893.
\(^{14}\) I am indebted to Thomas Svatos for locating the article for me.
\(^{15}\) Aleš Březina has suggested an alternate scenario. Noting that the writing begins with a kind of
squiggle, he wonders whether the mark was a transgression, which the composer punished by requiring
his son to write the text in the margin... This suggestion was, however, made before the birth of Mr. Březi-
na’s son Vilém.
Speculations 1

To understand this, we must try to determine just when Dvořák received the article. Writing on December 20th 1893, in his review of the “New World”, Huneker merely says that he brought the article in question to Dvořák “a year ago”, which is somewhat vague. Kovařík, however, helps us to get a little closer. When he recalls the “longer period which elapsed” before Dvořák began the symphony, he cannot possibly be referring to the two days between the completion of The American Flag on January 8 and the beginning of the continuous sketch of the symphony on January 10. Huneker must have brought the article earlier, probably around the middle of December.

If this is the case, we might wonder if it was “Negro Music” which stimulated the unexplained outpouring of sketches which Dvořák began on December 19th, and which led to the composition of the “New World. Let us look at the connection between the first sketch and the melodies in the article. Even though the sketch does lack the lowered seventh, it is in the key of G minor, like the first and third melodies, and seems to share with them not only a certain shape and tessitura, but a world of harmonic implication as well. Certainly, Dvořák’s later harmonization of this sketch, in the third movement of the Quintet in Eb, has a modal quality. The notable mediant and submediant progressions are precisely the implied harmonies of the first example in article.

It is even possible that the gesture in mm. 3–4 of the third tune may have inspired the main idea of the first sketch.

If the article did inspire the sketch, it might explain other things as well. As we know, the first sketch is almost certainly Dvořák’s attempt to reconfigure the American national anthem. There could be no more literal way of creating the “distin-

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16 The fact that Dvořák’s first sketch which can be associated with the “New World” was exactly a year before is merely a curiosity.
ctively American music“, called for at the close of the article, than by symbolically combining the G minor opening representing “Black music“ with the major key “American“ anthem which concludes the sketch.

Even if the relationship between the earliest sketches and “Negro Music“ cannot be conclusively proven, there should little doubt about the article’s relationship to the symphony. Perhaps the most striking connection is the appearance of “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot“ as the third musical example in the article. This is the only song routinely associated with the symphony, yet it has always been assumed that Dvořák first encountered the song when Henry Thacker Burleigh sang it for him. Since, however, we have never been able to establish just when, precisely, Dvořák and Burleigh began their association, it may well be that he first encountered the song in this form, and only later had Burleigh sing it to him.¹⁸

There are other possible links between “Negro Music“ and the symphony. The cadence of the second melody, with its F natural, is a possible source for the G minor tune in the “New World”, and it is perhaps not insignificant that the key has been preserved intact.

![Musical notation](image)

It is also worth considering a possible link between the opening of the symphony and the last two measures of the penultimate example, “I would not live always.“

![Musical notation](image)

Both are in the key of E minor and share motivic material. Although Dvořák always claimed simply to have modeled his material on “Negro“ songs, this hypothesis suggests that he may have been more calculating than we have thought in his efforts to make his symphony genuinely “American“. An example of this in a later context is the conspicuous similarity between the last three measures of the first

¹⁸ Burleigh’s various memories do not help us to solve the problem. For example, Burleigh recalls that Dvořák’s flat was filled with children, something unlikely at the time he was composing the “New World", but likely the following year when all his children were in the United States.
melody and the Scherzo of op. 97. If we change the key to major, repeat the first two measures of that group twice, and then repeat the last measure as well, it is almost identical to the Scherzo theme.

Too, several of the melodies in “Negro Music” feature the rhythmic figure sometimes called the “Scotch Snap”, which is heard in the main theme of the symphony’s first movement.

Despite the healthy skepticism we retain when we explore these kinds of connections, we must realize that the significance of “Negro Music” lies in the fact that we have no other evidence connecting Dvořák with Black music at this critical time in the development of his “American” style. Because of this lack of information, we have come to assume that it was inevitable for Dvořák to have composed a symphony with “Negro” melodies as his first major American work. Now, though, it seems possible, and even likely, that the seeds for a symphony based on “Negro” music were planted during a single visit by James Huneker.

Let us now imagine how it might all have happened in “real time”. Sometime in the middle of December, 1892, Huneker knocks on Dvořák’s door. He hands the composer a copy of Johann Tonsor’s article on Negro music and, based on his own testimony, provokes him by telling him about Brockhaven’s “Creole Suite”. He wonders if Dvořák might consider writing an orchestral piece based on the melodies that he has brought. Later, Dvořák reads the article, is deeply engaged by it, and begins sketching shortly thereafter. Once the project is underway, perhaps some time in January, he contacts Burleigh and asks him to sing some of the songs for him, including “Swing Low”. Several weeks, or months, later, Huneker comes again and Dvořák tells him about the symphony. Yet possibly through Jeannette Thurber (who seems to have a hand in everything) this information has already gotten to the swashbuckling reporter James Creelman – who somehow never understands that the symphony has already been written – and the whole matter is rapidly sensationalized in the newspapers.¹⁹

This chain of events would certainly help to explain Huneker’s later antipathy towards the symphony – after his initial, almost positive, review, he eventually grew almost to hate it.²⁰ Considering the role he had played, he must have expec-

¹⁹ See “Real Value”, op. cit.
²⁰ Although his first review of the “New World” was largely positive, his later position on the work ranged from dismissive to vitriolic, and he ended up concluding that “the influence of Dvořák’s American music has been evil.”
ted Dvořák to give him exclusive rights to the story, and Creelman ended up with the big “scoop”. But there was more. In the best spirit of contemporary journalism, scribes like Huneker believed that it was not merely their role to report the news – they wanted to have a hand in making it as well! Huneker’s desires were satisfied, but in a somewhat Faustian manner: he had probably hoped that Dvořák would write something like a “Negro” Symphony, an exotic set piece. Instead the “New World” used elements which Huneker considered to be “debased” and “primitive” to create a style which was widely heralded as truly American, something which tormented him until his death.

The Woman Who Made the “New World“

There remains only one small question to ask at the end of this. If we are trying to identify those figures that played the greatest roles in determining Dvořák’s musical choices, we must say something about the author of “Negro Music”. Just who was Johann Tonsor, and how did someone with a German name get to become an expert in the Black music of Kentucky? This would seem to be a fairly simple question. Indeed, after a few telephone calls I was happily hooked up with one Mr. Pen Bogert of the Filson Club of Louisville, a repository of local historical sources. I explained the issues involved, and asked if he wouldn’t mind tracking down Johann Tonsor. He said he was pleased to do so.

When he responded, several days later, he reported not only that there were no Johann Tonsors in the 1890’s, but also there were no Tonsors whatsoever in Kentucky from 1840–1920. Unless we were to imagine a hermit-like character such as Anton Philip “Papa” Heinrich, living in the woods and evading the census takers, “Tonsor” had to be a pseudonym. After entertaining the brief, heady, and not altogether impossible notion that Huneker had concocted the whole thing, we put our heads together and thought some more.

We had to find someone who, as the article strongly implies, was raised in the South and knew enough about the music to write such a piece: a person with musical training, intellect, and a certain dramatic flair. Two primary candidates emerged. The first was Mrs. Mary Alice Ives Fonda, who wrote under the name of Olivia Hensel. We can hear something like Tonsor’s voice in the rhapsodic tone of a paper, “Kentucky Music” which she read before the Filson Club on March 5, 1894. Speaking about the way some in her generation responded to Black song she noted: “The mingling of barbarian chant (sic) and soulful melody heard in the songs of the negroes who attended and surrounded them in childhood.” But Hensel was never known as a serious collector of Black music, and while Tonsor describes his “limited acquaintance“ with Gottschalk, Hensel had written a book him.

There was, however, an outstanding local expert on African American music in Louisville at the time: a writer, collector and composer named Mildred Hill. Hill was an expert on Black song who had written a chapter on music in a history of

\[21\] “Kentucky Music”, typescript provided by Pen Bogert of The Filson Club.
Louisville. She seems to have been in a position to know all of the things which “Tonsor” knew, and certainly shared “his” love of Black music. In her chapter she wrote: “If a history of music in Kentucky were being written, a large portion should be devoted to the music of the negro in our State.” She was certainly in contact with one of Dvořák’s closer American friends, as this from an article in the 10 July 1898 Louisville Commercial reveals:

At the recent music teachers’ national convention, held in New York, Mr. Krehbiel, the eminent critic, gave a lecture on the ‘Folksongs of America’, in which he was assisted by his wife, and I am told by one who was present that Miss Mildred Hill was often quoted. Miss Hill is an authority on this subject, having given much time to the collection of old negro songs, which if not collected and preserved will soon be lost to us forever. It is popular to sneer at the negro folksongs, but those who do so do not know them... Dvořák considered the negro melodies of sufficient interest to use them for the themes of his New World Symphony.

Hill and Krehbiel were also in contact around the time of the “New World’s“ premiere. On December 26, 1893, a week after the performance, Krehbiel sent Dvořák several melodies writing: “I have just received three more singular negro songs from Kentucky. I send the melodies for you to examine and would be more than delighted if you care to suggest a harmonization.” One of the melodies is a version of the tune “I Would Not Live Always”, which is also printed in “Tonsor’s” article of the year before. We can determine where Krehbiel got the melodies: written just above the tune are the words “From Boyle Co. Ky. Heard 55 years ago.” No one else seems to mention Boyle Country as an important collecting site, so it is significant that in his 1914 publication, Afro-American Folksongs Krehbiel again refers to: “Miss Mildred J. Hill, of Louisville, who gathered for me some of the most striking songs in my collection from the singing of an old woman who had been a slave in Boyle County, Ky.” It is clear that Hill sent the melodies which Krehbiel forwarded to Dvořák, and that the same tune is found in Tonsor’s article as well.

There are other connections between Hill and Tonsor. In her chapter in American folk music Hill expresses herself very much like the author of “Negro Music” on the subject of how to employ folk idioms in the high style:

The great composers of to-day are constantly using folk music of their respective countries as a basis for their compositions. Dr. Dvořák, the head of the American Conservatory, is attempting to do it for us, but he is a foreigner, and it must remain for an American composer to do this properly.
Hill’s interest in Dvořák, incidentally, continued. There is a listing in the Dvořák Museum for a “Hill Mildred”, which includes a letter to Dvořák dated March 2, 1895, and her transcription of several Black street cries. After confessing that she undertook “a trip of nearly three hundred miles to hear Mr. Seidl direct your New World Symphony in Cincinnati,” she adds that it “takes a real southern person to really understand your work in that symphony”. This echoes the beginning of Tonsor’s article: “To one who has passed his childhood in the South...“

There is a final detail in Mildred Hill’s chapter on music in Louisville, which connects us to Tonsor. Hill opens with an extended discussion of Black music and states that “Another branch of folk music, which is already lost is that of the roustabouts on the Mississippi and Ohio River steamboats.” Tonsor mentions “the dusky figures of the roustabouts”, and includes one of their songs in the article. There is little doubt that Johann Tonsor is Mildred Hill.

Speculations 2

This raises a host of questions. Why did Mildred Hill write under a pseudonym, and why a German one? We do not know very much about her at this point. Perhaps she was shy, or knew that she had a greater chance of being taken seriously with an authoritative sounding German name (it seemed peculiar name from the start for a lifelong Southerner) when she published outside of her home town in the metropolis of Chicago. She was certainly acquainted with things German since she spent an enormous amount of time discussing German musicians in her history of music in Louisville. The German background could explain both her pseudonym and the use of such words as heimweh and volkslieder. Whatever the case, she deserves a place in Dvořák studies, for without the collecting zeal, industry and eloquence of one Mildred Hill, the “New World” might never have been born, despite the best intentions of Huneker and others.

There is one more possibility for the authorship of the article, which is a bit unusual. Mildred Hill had a circle of woman friends with whom she spent a good deal of time. Adele Brandeis, writing in the Louisville Courier-Journal on May 7, 1962 in an article titled “Reminder of a Brilliant Career“ remembers Miss Hill:

She, my mother, the Misses Virginia and Charlotte Meldrum, Mrs. William Belknap and Mrs. Morris Belknam regularly lunched together and sometimes played the piano. They called themselves the F.C.’s What that stood for we never knew, perhaps Friendly Circle. But we, an irreverent younger generation, maintained it was “Foolish Cuties”.

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28 I am indebted to Jarmila Tauerová, director of the Dvořák Museum, for making this material available to me, and to Thomas Svatos for his research on the project.
29 When this paper was presented at a conference in Prague one questioner asked why Mildred Hill did not recognize her melodies when she heard the symphony. This is a good question, but difficult to answer satisfactorily. We have the results, in other words, she did not seem to recognize the material, but we cannot posit a specific answer. However, the melodies are extremely well masked, and we have no idea of whether or not Dvořák’s harmonizations are the ones that might have occurred to her. Finally, in the swirl of a symphonic performance we might imagine that listening for specific bits of music was out of the question, especially since she had no idea that Dvořák knew “Tonsor’s” article.
30 ibid., 85–86.
NEGRO MUSIC.

To one who has passed his childhood in the South, no music in the world is so tenderly pathetic, so wildly, uncouthly melancholy, so fraught with an overpowering bismark, as that of the negroes. When he hears one of these quaint old airs, he needs but to close his eyes and the potent spell of the music revives the past. Old memories, that he had deemed forgotten, rise as if obedient to the voice of enchantment. He is again a child in the cradle, and his faithful old "mammy," as she rocks him, bends over him in the firelight and croons:

\[ \text{\textbf{Music notation}} \]

Again he sees the dark river, lit up by the flare of burning pitch, and the dusky figures of the postboats; their white eyeballs gleaming, singing with stentorian voices while they load the boat with cotton, solo alternating with chorus:

\[ \text{\textbf{Music notation}} \]

O, dar' you well old mistress. \hspace{1cm} \textit{Wu-a-aw.}
I ain' come home tel Christmas. \hspace{1cm} \textit{Wu-n-nw.}
I'm gwine ter ter bring some money. \hspace{1cm} \textit{Yu-n-ow.}

Or it may be that he is sitting upon the broad piazza in the moonlight, and there is borne to him by the evening breeze a distant chorus, rising and falling in unearthly,

\[ \text{\textbf{Music notation}} \]

Note: The following words may be sung to this air:

"O, de marwamp roosts en de bellow log,
And de marwamp sits in de tree;
And when I hear dat marwamp sing,
My heart is sad in me."
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plaintive cadences, like the meaning of the wind or the cry of a lost spirit.

Genuine negro music is invariably in a peculiar minor, which differs from the civilized scale in two particulars; the sixth note of the gamut is omitted and the seventh is half a tone lower. Try over the specimen given above, making the F sharp, as it would be in modern music, and notice how completely the peculiar, plaintive charm vanishes. There are some other differences which cannot be represented in musical notation. For instance, the A in the fourth bar of the passage above is neither A nor yet A flat, but between the two. This scale is said to be that of the primitive races —of the Esquimaux, the Egyptians, the South Sea islanders. Traces of it may be found in Meyerbeer, Chopin and Grieg, composers who have made free use of *vocal* music. I have no doubt that this music, like Voodooism, is a remnant of former idolatry. Doubtless many of these hymns have been sung for centuries before the shrines of fetishes in the dark jungles of Africa.

As to rhythm, a certain syncopation, represented by an eighth and dotted quarter is common.

When the blacks came into contact with the major scale of the whites, they adopted it, preserving still the syncopated rhythm and the omission of one note of the scale (the seventh in the major.) For example:

"Swing low, sweet chariot."

There is the same omission of the seventh in Scotch music.

Much of the so-called negro music is as little like what it is intended to represent as the words are like negro dialect.

It is quite a common thing for the negro women to im-
previse words and music while they are at work, a sort of Wagnerian "melos," or endless melody, as it were. I have often heard them drone softly thus all through the livelong, bright summer day.

The music is an important factor in their religious (?) revivals. I shall never forget my experience at one of these meetings. The negroes had been wrought up almost to a pitch of frenzy by the servile declamation of a "colored brother." They were all standing; the women kept up a continuous, subdued, droning—their emotional state required some outlet: a huge stalwart darky began a hymn in which all speedily joined; about fifty of them crowded about a young girl whom they wished to "bring through," singing at the top of their voices and swaying their bodies rhythmically to and fro. The object of their solitude sat for a time in a state of stupor. Everywhere she looked there were gaping throats and fierce eyes glaring at her like those of wild beasts. She was the center of attraction. Gradually she joined in the song and ended by falling into a convulsion of such violence that five of the men could with difficulty hold her. This "new birth" was received with many pious ejaculations of "Praise the Lord!"

"Previous condition of servitude" in certain reformatory institutions of the state, or penitentiary or other petty peculation does not in the least debar a brother from active participation in these exercises.

Various attempts have been made at collecting these our only melodies but they have not been very successful, for the reason that the tunes are usually arranged in four parts by the collector. Now, in the first place, these airs are always sung in unison, and in the second place the flattening of the seventh, as every musician will immediately perceive, renders it well-nigh impossible to harmonize them. As it is, the melody is usually sacrificed to the harmony. The melodies, pure and simple, with no attempt at improving them, should be collected and preserved; for, like Caucasian church music, they are rapidly disappearing before the triumphant march of "Gospel Hymns!"

When our American musical Messiah sees fit to be born
Later in the article she mentions the interest in astronomy she shared with Mildred and noted that they “called ourselves the F.R.S.S.G.’s – Fellows of the Royal Society of Star Gazers. This kind of letter play suggests that perhaps Tonsor is an acronym, and possibly even that the article was jointly written with Mildred’s circle of friends. (My best guess to this point is “The Oldest Negro Song On Record” or some such thing.) Still, the greatest likelihood is that Hill wrote the article on her own – and the name may or may not be an acronym.31

Coda

This study closes with a series of ironies! First, there is poor Huneker, who aimed to the hero of the day, Dvořák’s great guide to American music, and has ended up as the villain in Dvořák studies, his great contribution until now unknown.32 Here

31 We have undertaken a research project on Mildred Hill and are attempting to locate her papers. Although we located a scrapbook at the University of Louisville, we were unable to find any of her notations of African American music.

32 For a fuller discussion of the relationship between Dvořák and Huneker see my book New Worlds of Dvořák, Chapter 7, “The Man Who Made the New World.”
we have Krehbiel, trying in December of 1893 to interest Dvořák in harmonizing “authentic” Negro melodies from Kentucky, unaware that the composer had already used them in his modeling for the “New World” Symphony the year before. Mildred Hill throws down the gauntlet to any “Messiah of American music”, who will create national music. Dvořák takes the challenge, writes the symphony, and is still found wanting by the challenger who says: “it must remain for an American composer to do this properly.” (No doubt she was totally ignorant of her role in the genesis of the symphony).

Considering Dvořák’s ill-advised comment – made in Boston – about the mental capacities of women, it seems utterly fitting that the ideas of a woman (or possibly even a group of women) inspired the “New World“ Symphony. In this regard we might recall that it was women – Jeanette Thurber and her emissary Adele Margolis – who got Dvořák to the United States in the first place, and another woman, Amy Beach, who wrote the great response to his symphony. And finally the greatest irony: Mildred Hill was the only person Dvořák came into contact with who wrote music which would eventually become far more famous than his own. She was the composer of “Happy Birthday“.  

Table 1. Chronology of Relevant Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late September, 1892</td>
<td>Dvořák arrives in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 12, 1892</td>
<td>400th Anniversary of Columbus. Dvořák hears speech on the “New World”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[December 15, 1892?]</td>
<td>[Huneker’s visit?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 19, 1892</td>
<td>Dvořák begins sketching in AMSK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 8, 1893</td>
<td>American Flag completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 10, 1893</td>
<td>Continuous sketch for “New World” begun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 21, 1893</td>
<td>Beginning of controversy over Dvořák’s views on race and music. Article in New York Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24, 1893</td>
<td>“New World” finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 3, 1893</td>
<td>Dvořák leaves for Spillville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 15, 1893</td>
<td>“New World” gets first performance in Carnegie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall December 20, 1893</td>
<td>Huneker’s review of “New World“ in The Musical Courier December 26, 1893 Dvořák receives letter with “Negro” tunes from Krehbiel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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33 Article “Women Can’t Help” in the Boston Post, Novemeber 30, 1892. The composer was reported to have said: “Here all the ladies play. It is well; it is nice. But I am afraid the ladies cannot help us much. They have not the creative power.”

34 The song “Happy Birthday”, was first published under the title “Good morning to all”, in Song Stories for the Kindergarten. Chicago: Clayton F. Summy Co., 1896 New ed, rev. Mildred wrote the music, and her sister Patty Hill is credited with the text.
Dvojice, která napsala „Novosvětskou“

Michael Beckerman (Santa Barbara)

Esejisticky pojatý text přináší úvahu o tom, proč Dvořák napsal svou „Novosvětskou“ symfonii tak, jak ji napsal, a proč se do ní snažil pojmout ohlasy hudby černých Američanů. Obrací přitom pozornost k pravděpodobné Dvořákově inspirátorce, amatérské spisovatelce, sběratelce písní a skladatelce Mildred J. Hillové z Louisville (Kentucky), kterou identifikuje jako autorku článku „Negro Music“, uveřejněného pod pseudonymem Johann Tonsor v chicagském časopisu Music v prosinci 1892.

résumé Jarmila Gabrielová