

CITY OF SAN JOSE' S Arts Express Program Presents:

Ives Quartet
Making America Home
Teacher Guide
Grades 4-8
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About the Arts Organization

The Ives Quartet is a fully independent performing, touring, and recording string quartet operating as a 501(c)(3) public-benefit corporation. Formed in 1998, the Quartet combines the talent and experience of the international, solo, orchestra, chamber, recording, and teaching careers of its artist members—Bettina Mussumeli, violin; Susan Freier, violin; Jodi Levitz, viola; and Stephen Harrison, cello. Freier and Harrison, former members of the predecessor Stanford Quartet, are founding members; Mussumeli and Levitz, faculty members of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, joined the Quartet in 2005 and 2006, respectively. The organization will celebrate its tenth anniversary during its 2008–2009 season with a series of specially programmed concerts featuring guest artists and contemporary composers.

The mission of the Ives Quartet (IQ) is to create powerful live-music experiences through the presentation of fresh and informed interpretations of a carefully curated repertory to American and international audiences. Inspired by the passionate, artistic commitment and temperament of American composer Charles Ives (1874–1954), the Quartet's repertoire combines established masterworks with underappreciated gems, neglected scores of early twentieth-century America, and specially commissioned new pieces. The Quartet seeks enthusiastic critical acclaim and popular embrace for the quality of its performances, its exploration of a distinctive repertory, and the impact of its live-concert experience on a diverse number of audience segments.

About the Program

Dvorak wrote his "American" Quartet during a three-year stay in the US, where he had traveled from his native Bohemia (the Czech Republic) in the 1890s. He became very homesick in this strange new country and sought out other Bohemians who had moved to the little town of Spillville Iowa. He was so excited to be among his countrymen that he wrote the "American" Quartet in three days!

So many of us in the Bay Area come from other countries or have parents who come from other countries. What do we do when we're homesick? The members of the Ives Quartet have parents or grandparents who were born in other countries. How did Dvorak see this new country? How do you or your parents?

Learning Objectives

Students will--

- Learn the four instruments in a string quartet and how the musicians communicate with no conductor
- Learn about the composer Antonin Dvorak
- Examine how immigration plays a role in creating new forms of music in the United States
- Expose a culturally diverse student population to forms of music that are highly valued and appreciated in American culture

Historical and Cultural Context

In Western art music, which is often referred to as "Classical music," **string quartets** are considered to be an important type of chamber music. String quartets consist of two violins, a viola, and a cello playing a multi-movement musical composition written in sonata form. The particular choice and number of instruments derives from the registers of the human voice: soprano, alto, tenor and bass. In the string quartet, two violins play the soprano and alto vocal registers, the viola plays the tenor register and the cello plays the bass register.

There is no conductor in a string quartet, and members rely on body language to communicate.

Antonin Dvorak, arguably the greatest of the Czech composers, was born on September 8, 1841, in a little Bohemian village in what is today the Czech Republic. He grew up liking folk songs, and very early in his life, he showed that he had musical talent. Dvorak took violin lessons from a local schoolmaster. Later he went to Prague, the capital, to study the organ and music composition. He was able to support himself as a violinist and piano teacher. He grew more and more famous, especially after he composed his Slavonic Dances. He also wrote more musical compositions like operas and symphonies. While he was teaching composition at the Prague Conservatory, he was invited to come to America to become the artistic director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, teaching three hours a day for eight months and conducting eight concerts annually. The salary was \$15,000 a year. At the time, Dvorak was making \$500 a month in Prague. Dvorak accepted the invitation. He came to America with his wife and two of their six children.

While in America, Dvorak wrote some of his best-loved works, including Symphony No. 9 (*From the New World*), which premiered in Carnegie Hall. He also wrote a cello concerto, "*The American Flag*" cantata, the "*American*" string quartet, and a string quintet. He and his family spent the summer of 1893 in a tiny Czech community in Spillville, Iowa, on the banks of the Turkey River. He also visited the Minneapolis, Minnesota area and Minnehaha Falls.

In 1894, Dvorak returned home and for the last ten years of his life he continued to compose. He was famous, but he had money problems because he sold his compositions for so little that he had nothing to live on. He died in 1904.

Vocabulary—

Motif: A distinctive and recurring sounds used to impart a theme or unifying idea

Register: in the human voice is a particular series of tones, produced in the same vibratory pattern

Theme and variation: A compositional form in which a theme is clearly stated and followed by a number of variations

Sonata-allegro form: A musical form using the overall design of exposition, development and recapitulation

Preparation for the Program and Reflecting on the Program

1. Review what a quartet is and how group members communicate. During the performance, have students pay attention to this communication and discuss what they saw after the performance.
2. Review who Dvorak was and his importance as a composer in America
3. Discuss students' own musical traditions. Have them write or verbally describe how music plays a part of their own cultural background.
4. Students can choose a type of music (hip-hop, country, gospel, rock and roll, etc.) and research what influences that type of music had throughout the world and how those different influences are heard in the music.

Curriculum Connections--CA Visual and Performing Arts Standards

Note: The California Visual and Performing Arts Standards were created based on the premise that each student is receiving comprehensive and sequential arts instruction in all four major arts disciplines. Since this is rarely the case, the following standards may not correspond to the grade levels served by the Arts Express program.

Standards in Music:

Artistic Perception

1.4 (grade 5) Analyze the use of music elements in aural examples from various genres

Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 (grade 4) Explain the relationship between music and events in history

3.5 (grade 5) Describe the influence of various cultures on the music of the United States

3.2 (grade 8) identify and explain the influences of various cultures on music

Connections, Relationships, Applications

5.1 (grade 4) Identify and interpret expressive characteristics in music

Resources

- Antonin Dvorak: <http://essentialsofmusic.com/>
- Seven part lesson on Dvorak in America for high school: <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2321/>
- Dvorak's impact on America: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~humiowa/petera1.htm>