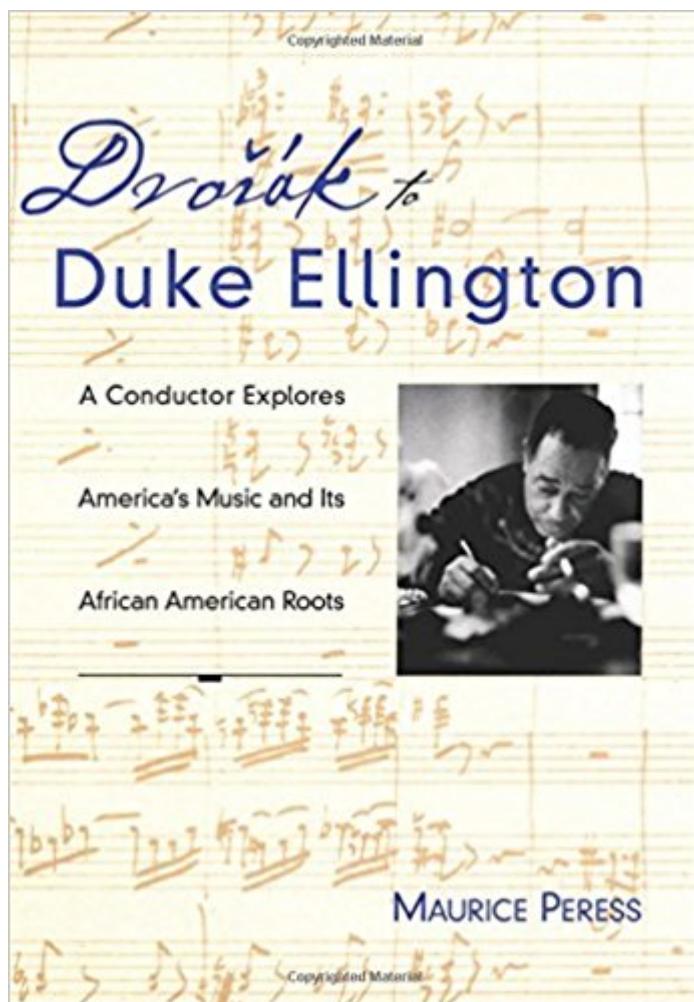


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Dvorák To Duke Ellington: A Conductor Explores America's Music And Its African American Roots



Synopsis

Drawing upon a remarkable mix of intensive research and the personal experience of a career devoted to the music about which Dvorák so presciently spoke, Maurice Peress's lively and convincing narrative treats readers to a rare and delightful glimpse behind the scenes of the burgeoning American school of music and beyond. In Dvorák to Duke Ellington, Peress begins by recounting the music's formative years: Dvorák's three year residency as Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York (1892-1895), and his students, in particular Will Marion Cook and Rubin Goldmark, who would in turn become the teachers of Ellington, Gershwin, and Copland. We follow Dvorák to the famed Chicago World's Fair of 1893, where he directed a concert of his music for Bohemian Honor Day. Peress brings to light the little known African American presence at the Fair: the piano professors, about-to-be-ragtimers; and the gifted young artists Paul Dunbar, Harry T. Burleigh, and Cook, who gathered at the Haitian Pavilion with its director, Frederick Douglass, to organize their own gala concert for Colored Persons Day. Peress, a distinguished conductor, is himself a part of this story; working with Duke Ellington on the Suite from Black, Brown and Beige and his "opera comique," Queenie Pie; conducting the world premiere of Leonard Bernstein's Mass; and reconstructing landmark American concerts at which George Antheil's Ballet Mecanique, George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, James Reese Europe's Clef Club (the first all-black concert at Carnegie Hall), and Ellington's Black, Brown and Beige, were first presented. Concluding with an astounding look at Ellington and his music, Dvorák to Duke Ellington offers an engrossing, elegant portrait of the Dvorák legacy, America's music, and the inestimable African-American influence upon it.

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Customer Reviews

"Peress has in-depth and first-hand knowledge of the subject as he worked with Ellington, edited and/or orchestrated five of Ellington's symphonic works, and has presented a number of critically acclaimed historically accurate concert recreations...With an unparalleled background in music and research, Peress is uniquely suited to delve into the topic at hand, and does so with skillful results,...there is not a graduate composition or conducting major who would not benefit from reading this highly personal tome." --JCG"For anyone interested in a good look at a poorly understood line of American musical history, or for anyone interested in a simple, fascinating story of music and genius, Peress's Dvorak to Duke Ellington is a captivating read." --International Musician"What makes Dvorák to Duke Ellington so compelling is that it is written by an accomplished conductor who collaborated with Ellington late in his life on the orchestration and/or creation of some of his major compositions, most notably Black, Brown, and Beige and Queenie Pie. Among Peress's most significant achievements is his balancing of an almost irrepressible enthusiasm for the music he champions with a more objective judgement that needs to be brought to bear on what is still a raw topic: namely, how do we come to terms with the complicated miscegenation that is American music?"--Symphony

Maurice Peress is a Professor of Music, Aaron Copland School of Music, City University of New York, and the Graduate School of the City of New York.

This book is very well written and insightful. I used it on a history project and it was perfect! Awesome.

Peress's 'Dvorak to Duke Ellington' is necessary reading for any serious Duke Ellington fan or any student of the lineage of jazz. Despite long passages spoken in highly technical musical terminology (which will be manna for composers out there), Peress brings so many interesting anecdotes to light, so many fresh insights into Ellington's working methods to composing, laypersons too will gain profound wisdom into the infrastructure that later brought BeBop, hardBop, Modern, R&B, Blues and Rock & Roll into reality. For Duke lovers, it is heartening to see Peress discover (tearfully) what we already had known: his music is a gift to world history. Peress's nuanced details as to how Duke

scored his sobering emotional analyses of Black Culture is particularly stunning, he having access to rare Ellington family archives and an insiders association with the Duke. And Duke was a poet-literally. YES! I was completely taken aback at how much is owed to Antonin Dvorak, the Czech emigree, for shaping the jazz juggernaut, or more specifically, the jazz orchestral juggernaut. I am not sure that the limber modern Jazz idiom as we know it, or the Gershwin orchestral phenomenon, would have garnered legitimacy without Dvorak's extra-ordinary cheerleading of our indigenous arts such as Ragtime, sharecropper tunes, and gospel songs. There is an argument intrinsically proffered in the book that Dvorak might have assisted in the abolition of minstrelsy itself. Peress only missed a few related facts. For instance, he did not cover the Harlem Renaissance leadership and its muscular shaping of the Jazz and Blues idioms. Those gentlemen (Dubois, et.al) also marketed the Duke heavily, and deserve a mention in this book. Peress also did not describe the original etymology of Jazz as being 'Jass,' a vulgar term coined by whites for early New Orleans jazz that meant something akin to Sexual Intercourse, which I believe should be defined in every sweeping analysis of this art. Lastly, this book reveals the star-touched career of the author, Maurice Peress, as a composer. I look forward to collecting Peress's jazz re-conditionings, as well as Classical recordings, on CD and vinyl at the soonest opportunity. Michael James Hawk Seattle WA USA July 3, 2007

best product. a gift to my brother , Highly Recommend! good . next day arrive.

Maurice Peress is an inspiring guide to the main roads and byways of American music. A conductor of distinction and a writer, scholar and thinker of substance, he offers a combination of personal reminiscences and exciting historical discoveries. He is a leading expert on Dvorak and his time, and offers fresh new insights into the material. His original research on Dvorak's American years has been quite influential in the development of this field more broadly and thus he may be considered the "Dean" of American Dvorak scholarship. This is a splendid book to read straight through, or to browse and enjoy.

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