

An American Port of Call
Adolphus Hailstork (1941–)

Written: 1985

Movements: One

Style: Contemporary American

Duration: Nine minutes

Virginia resident Adolphus Hailstork received his doctorate in composition from Michigan State University, where he was a student of H. Owen Reed. He had previously studied at Manhattan School of Music under Vittorio Giannini and David Diamond, at the American Institute at Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger, and at Howard University with Mark Fax. Currently, Dr. Hailstork is Professor of Music and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Before that appointment he was Professor of Music and Composer-in-Residence at Norfolk State University.

Dr. Hailstork has written in a variety of genres, producing works for chorus, solo voice, piano, organ, various chamber ensembles, band, and orchestra. His early compositions include *Celebration*, recorded by the Detroit Symphony in 1976; and two works for band (*Out of the Depths*, 1977, and *American Guernica*, 1983), both of which won national competitions. Dr. Hailstork's works have been performed by such prestigious ensembles as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, and the New York Philharmonic, under the batons of leading conductors such as James DePreist, Daniel Barenboim, Kurt Masur, and Lorin Maazel. Dr. Hailstork's *Second Symphony* was commissioned by the Detroit Symphony. His second opera, *Joshua's Boots*, was commissioned by the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Kansas City Lyric Opera. Dr. Hailstork's *Second* and *Third Symphonies* were recorded by the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra, under David Lockington, on a Naxos label disc released in January 2007.

Recent works include *Earthrise*, a new large scale choral work premiered by James Conlon, *Three Studies on Chant Melodies* for the American Guild of Organists, and *Whitman's Journey*, a cantata for chorus and orchestra, premiered by the Master Chorale of Washington, D.C. *Rise for Freedom*, an opera about the Underground Railroad, was premiered by the Cincinnati Opera Company.

Adolphus Hailstork wrote *An American Port of Call* for the Virginia Symphony who premiered it in 1985. Dr. Hailstork gives this summary of the piece:

The concert overture, in sonata-allegro form captures the strident (and occasionally tender and even mysterious) energy of a busy American port city. The great port of Norfolk, Virginia, where I live, was the direct inspiration.

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Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Written: 1878

Movements: Three

Style: Romantic

Duration: 34 minutes

The fact that today we consider Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* a musical masterpiece might surprise many of those who were present at its first performance. It is a great example of

a work that got horrible reviews from early critics. The venerable Eduard Hanslick wrote: “The violin is no longer played: it is tugged about, torn, beaten black and blue. . . . Tchaikovsky’s *Violin Concerto* confronts us for the first time with the hideous idea that there may be musical compositions whose stink one can hear.”

Hanslick’s review so deeply distressed Tchaikovsky that he carried the review with him for months after the premiere. Perhaps even more hurtful, Leopold Auer—the dedicatee of the concerto—refused to perform it! Part of it was Tchaikovsky’s fault. He didn’t show the piece to Auer until it was already in print, denying the great violinist any input into its technical demands. Nevertheless, from the start Auer was unsure of the music’s quality. He never really warmed up to it. In 1912—long after the concerto’s premiere—Auer remarked, “warmly as I had championed the symphonic works of the young composer, I could not feel the same enthusiasm for the violin concerto . . . still less could I place it on the same level as his strictly orchestral compositions. I am still of the same opinion.”

What Hanslick, Auer, and Tchaikovsky could not foresee, however, was the power of the audience. More than one hundred and thirty years later, Tchaikovsky’s *Violin Concerto* is one of the most frequently performed classical pieces.

Part of the concerto’s popularity comes from its transparent simplicity and charm. Audiences like the fierce demands it places on the soloist. Two equally lyrical tunes, which Tchaikovsky submits to continuous repetition and variation, make up the first movement. The *Canzonetta* movement is Tchaikovsky’s second attempt at the slow movement. Here the simple melody is set against an ensemble of woodwinds, muted strings, and horn. The movement almost lulls the audience to sleep. The *Finale* abruptly interrupts the serenity. Fast and very

lively, the movement is a brilliant rondo, contrasting sustained, melodic episodes with dazzling virtuosic fireworks for the solo violinist.

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Pétrouchka

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Written: 1911, revised in 1947

Movements: Ballet in four scenes

Style: Contemporary

Duration: 34 minutes

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a young Russian émigré named Igor Stravinsky landed in Paris, certain to take the city by storm. He needed more than talent to make his impression on Paris; he needed inspiration and, most importantly, an audience. Stravinsky found both in his association with the impresario Sergei Diaghilev and in the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev was part of a group of poets, philosophers, musicians and artists whose objective was the integration of folk traditions into all aspects of art and literature. The Ballets Russes was the “radical chique” of the day.

After completing *The Firebird*, his first great ballet for Diaghilev, Stravinsky was supposed to start on a second, called *The Rite of Spring*. Instead he got sidetracked working on “an orchestral piece in which the piano would play the most important part.” Diaghilev arrived one day expecting to hear sketches of the *Rite of Spring*. Instead, he heard a good deal of the

newly titled *Pétrouchka*. Immediately taken with the music, Diaghilev convinced Stravinsky to use it as the basis for another ballet.

The ballet begins with a chaotic street scene at the Shrovetide Fair in St. Petersburg. Drummers interrupt, announcing the beginning of a puppet show. A mysterious showman exhibits three puppets—Pétrouchka, the Moor, and the Ballerina—who he magically brings to life. Pétrouchka is sensitive, but awkward and ugly. The Moor taunts him. The second scene shows Pétrouchka in his room. Two clarinets play a dissonant melody that represents his despair at having been rejected by the Ballerina. The third scene finds the Moor lying in his room. The Ballerina enters and dances for him until Pétrouchka bursts in, only to be chased off by the Moor. In the final scene, we are back at the fair, with dancing bears, coachmen, grooms and nursemaids. Pétrouchka rushes into the crowd, pursued by the Moor who attacks him and strikes him dead with his scimitar. The showman reassures the horror-stricken crowd that Pétrouchka is only a puppet, but when the spectators leave, the puppet's apparition startles him. Pétrouchka jeers at the terrified puppeteer from the roof of his booth.

Stravinsky revised *Pétrouchka* in 1947 for concert performance, reducing the orchestration and adding a “concert ending”—and placing it in American copyright!

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