

for Joseph Gramley  
**(Cycles) America**

Kojiro Umezaki  
2009

Vibraphone

Cymbals

Bass Drum

Electronics

start movie

0'00"

summon waves (optional)

10" countdown

noise/waves

Cym.

B. D.

4

0'13"

0'24"

0'29"

0'34"

Vib.

Cym.

B. D.

Elec.

8

0'39"

0'43"

0'45"

0'53"

AMERICA

=86

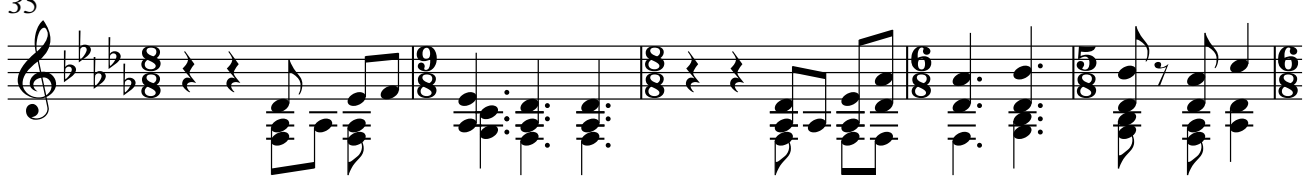
gramophone

13  
Vib.  **CENTRE OF  
EQUAL DAUGHTERS,** **EQUAL SONS,** **ALL,**


19  
Vib.  **ALL ALIKE  
ENDEAR'D,** **GROWN,**

24  
Vib.  **UNGROWN,**

30  
Vib.  **YOUNG OR OLD,** **STRONG,**

35  
Vib.  **AMPLE,**

40  
Vib.  **FAIR,** **ENDURING,**

46  
Vib.  **CAPABLE,** **RICH,** **PERENNIAL WITH THE EARTH,**

51

Vib.

WITH FREEDOM,

57

Vib.

LAW, AND LOVE

62

Vib.

66

Vib.

Cym.

B. D.

3'25" 3'40"

summon waves (optional) continue summoning waves for 20"+ (optional)

Elec.

## PROGRAM NOTES

Antonín Dvořák arrives in New York City in 1892 to head the new National Conservatory, famously claiming that American music should draw inspiration from what is unique to the nation, the same year the “deathbed” edition of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* is published. In one of the annexes appears:

America  
Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,  
All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,  
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,  
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,  
A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,  
Chair'd in the adamant of Time.

Remarkably, an Edison gramophone recording of “America,” purportedly with Whitman himself reading the work, survives (although the last two lines are missing).

Everyday at 5 p.m., the theme from the Largo movement of Dvořák’s 9th Symphony, *From the New World*, broadcasts out of loudspeakers from local community centers throughout Japan announcing to children that it’s time to go home. One could trace the near century-long path from the New York Philharmonic premiere to modern suburban Tokyo through the 1922 art song arrangement of the Largo movement and lyrics by William Arms Fisher, championed later by Paul Robeson and his notable 1958 performance at Carnegie Hall, titled “Goin’ Home.”

Joe Gramley asked me if I would write a short piece for him to be performed on a program of new works by those with connections to New York City. Happening to be on coasts of Long Island around that time, my path in arriving at this piece started in Montauk and followed through Whitman, 1892, “America,” Dvořák, his 9th Symphony, Bernstein’s 1962 recording of it with the New York Philharmonic, Robeson’s Carnegie Hall performance of Fisher’s “Goin’ Home,” and a leap to my old Tokyo neighborhood.

Both the vibraphone part and the underlying sustained harmonic material (based on the Bernstein recording) are derived from a retrograde reinterpretation of Dvořák’s work, metaphorically reaching back in time, while the gramophone noisily rolls Whitman’s voice forward in periodic loops loosely tied to the four-mallet arrangement for vibraphone with spinning motor. Framing all of this are electronically-enhanced sounds of incoming/crashing and receding waves from the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (recorded near Montauk, NY and Newport Beach, CA), speaking possibly to how the optimism and uniqueness in the America observed by both Whitman and Dvořák ebbs and flows over time.

## PERFORMANCE NOTES

\* Vibraphone motor speed (if available) should not be similar to the audible cylinder speed of the gramophone. In general, the gramophone is around mm=100. A 3:2 ratio would be preferable (approximately mm=150 for the vibe motor, if possible).

\* Of the three cymbals, one can be without sizzles, preferably the one with the lowest frequencies (i.e. largest), to allow for slightly more variety when mimicking/summoning the waves.

\* There is a 10 second silent countdown at the beginning of the movie, after which the recorded waves/noise enter immediately. As an option, one may start the movie after some amount of improvisation on the cymbals and bass drum. The improvisation should lead naturally into the passage where the recording becomes audible (at movie timecode 0'00"). The intended imagery is mimicking/summoning of waves. Alternatively, one can play the transcription<sup>1</sup> of an improvisation performed by Joseph Gramley titled "(Cycles) America Intro Transcription," which is provided below as an example introduction (measures 1 through 10).

\* The vibraphone part can start right at the end of the first utterance of "America." Try not to leave too much time between the last gesture on the cymbals/bass drum (before the voice enters) and the entry of the vibraphone (immediately after "America").

\* At the end of the vibraphone part, one may return back to the opening by mimicking waves on the bass drum and cymbals.

\* Despite the audio in the movie ending near 3'55", the movie continues to display timecode (in silence) until 5'00" so that the movie does not stop abruptly and to allow for the option to add improvisation at the end.

\* One central idea is that in its entirety the piece is also a cycle. If both the opening and ending options for improvisation are performed, ending the piece like it begins (dynamic level, type of gesture/shape, etc.) would be desirable.

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Dane Crozier for this transcription.

## FILES

The following files are included in the online download (after unzipping the archive file):

- (C)A\_BackingTrack\_0.mov (backing audio track with timecode video track, voice-audio dB differential at 0dB)
- (C)A\_BackingTrack\_3.mov (ditto with voice-audio dB differential at 3dB)
- (C)A\_BackingTrack\_6.mov (ditto with voice-audio dB differential at 6dB)
- (Cycles) America.pdf (score including these notes)
- (Cycles) America.mp3 (a rough mix of a new version for the work)

There are three options for the movie files:

(C)A\_BackingTrack\_0.mov

(C)A\_BackingTrack\_3.mov

(C)A\_BackingTrack\_6.mov

The number in the file names above (i.e. 0, 3, 6) refer to the dB difference between the voice and the other audio in the backing track. The higher the number, the louder the voice will be relative to the other audio. These movies are not meant to be projected for the audience to view. They are intended only for the performer to view as a way to synchronize the electronic parts with the score.

# (Cycles) America Intro Transcription

Kojiro Umezaki

Cymbals

*pp* *p* *<mf* *mp* *f* *p* *>pp* *<p*

*l.r. throughout*

Bass Drum

*p* *mp* *mf* *mp* *f*

Cym.

*mp* *<* *f* *mf* *ff* *mf*

B. D.

*mp* *<* *mf* *f* *<ff*

Cym.

*ff* *>p* *<f* *mp* *>* *f* *mp* *>p*

B. D.

*f* *<ff* *mp* *<f* *f* *>mf*

Cym.

*p* *<mp* *mf* *mp* *mp*

B. D.

*p* *<mp* *<mf* *mp* *<mf*

*to vibraphone*