

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2023 8:00 PM // KANSAS CITY, HELZBERG HALL**

**Filharmonie Brno**  
**Dennis Russell Davies, Chief Conductor & Artistic Director**

**PROGRAM**

**Othello**, concert overture for orchestra, Op. 93

**Antonín Dvořák**

**Thunderbolt P-47**, scherzo for orchestra H 309

**Bohuslav Martinů**

**Intermission**

**Amelia**

**Laurie Anderson**

1. The Plan
2. The Motor
3. San Juan
4. Brazil
5. Dakar
6. The Letter
7. India
8. Flying at Night
9. Bangkok
10. Mandalay
11. New Guinea
12. New Guinea
13. Radio

**Laurie Anderson**, voice, violin, electronics  
**Rubin Kodheli**, violoncello

## TEXTS

### LAURIE ANDERSON

#### Amelia

##### 1. The Plan

On June 1st 1937 Amelia Earhart took off from Miami Airport.

Her plan was to fly around the world counterclockwise.

A thousand miles a day. And to become the first woman to circumnavigate the earth.

Her plane was a small Lockheed Electra. She flew non-stop for thirty-two days with only short breaks for fuel and sleep, her navigator Fred Noonan sitting in the back.

On July 2, she took off across the Pacific on the last leg of her journey headed for Howland island. She began broadcasting an SOS on her radio but she was on the wrong frequency and lost contact with the coast guard cutter assigned to guide her in. They could hear her but she couldn't hear them. An hour later she vanished. Her plane was never found.

##### 2. The Motor

It was the sound of the motor I remember the most.

Takeoff June 1, 1937. Miami municipal Airport.

The idea? To fly from California back to California by the longest route possible. To circle the world from east to west.

I see something shining north northwest. I see something shining – shining in the distance.

Waves of air. Feel the wind blow.

Waves of water, water far below.

Waves of air feel the wind blow water far below.

Waves of air lift me up lift me up left me up!

##### 3. San Juan

June 3 San Juan. I see it from the air clear as a map.

Ten past one. The shadow of my plane on the water.

Jungle tree tops below. Follow railroad track.

Then a muddy river.

Wind direction? I can see the way the wind is blowing from the way smoke is rising from the fires.

From the way the clothes are swinging on the lines.

The shadow of my plane on the water.

##### 4. Brazil

June 7. Brazil. Wet grass. Takeoff was in total darkness.

Then pitch black ocean.

The south Atlantic.

Navigator asleep. The Sea – a dirty gray. Static on the radio.

We drop. We're dropping down. Shredding the clouds.

The sky has many avenues and streets.

But you have to know how to find them.

Streets of air. Air streets.

We cross the equator.

Crossing the equator. Brilliant sun.

Sea is black. Horizon tilts.

Crossing the equator. Brilliant sun. Sea is black. Horizon tilts.

Dropping down through the shining white valleys of clouds.  
Sky red. Then gold. Then black again.

### **5. Dakar**

June 8. Dakar. Very hot air can make for the worst flying conditions.  
Motor stalls. Cuts out. The cockpit boiling. The Badlands.  
Everywhere so hot. So hot.

The instruments quiver. All the meters burning up.  
Everything so hot, so hot.  
I am hungry. I am hot.  
Sand. A caravan. Waves of sand. And heat. A camp. Another camp.  
I am hungry. I am hot. All the meters burning up.  
I am hungry. I am hot. The sea is dark. Waves of heat.  
Sand. A caravan. Waves of sand. And heat A camp. Another camp.  
Black eagles. I am hungry.  
Sand. A caravan. Sand. A caravan.  
I am hungry. I am hot.

### **6. The Letter**

June 9. Khartoum  
We carry a letter. To whom it may concern.  
Just in case the engines fail and we fall into the Arabian desert  
I possess a letter which I myself cannot read.  
It is addressed to Arab tribesmen  
and it explains how and why a woman pilot  
might drop from the sky onto their land  
and it explains what to do if she did drop down  
and who to call.  
Have walking shoes. Have maps.  
Have extra water.

### **7. India**

June 17. Karachi.  
Black eagles at 500 feet  
Hills roll like carpets down to the water's edge.  
Southerly winds. A mist.

A monsoon then a sudden sandstorm. Far below factories and jute mills are glaring in the sun. A fringe of docks.  
Land at Dum Dum Airport Calcutta. The streets are wide. White bulls are walking everywhere.

June 18  
Gray skies. Gray skies. We passed over the many mouths of the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers. Small figures trailing in the water look up as we pass.  
Some wave their hats.  
Hello goodbye Hello. Hello goodbye Hello.  
Two pagodas. Hilly islands Mud volcanoes. Villages on stilts.  
From Singapore to Java.

The hazy contours of the mountains. Waters of Port Darwin a vivid green.  
Boats below are fishing for pearls. Bought a knife.

Shipped the parachutes home today,  
Shouldn't need them anymore. No we shouldn't need them  
Not over the open ocean, where there's no place to land.

### **8. Flying at Night**

I remember going to the airfields  
at night in Los Angeles  
And watching the daredevil pilots  
do loop de loops up in the sky  
And I knew then I wanted to fly.

Running across the dark lawn  
when I was a kid  
Top speed into the darkness.  
Nothing above me, nothing below me.  
I'm running I'm free

Flying at night – flying at night  
Into the darkness – turn off the headlights  
Nothing below me Nothing above me.  
I'm flying I'm free  
Skimming the water – riding the airwaves  
High diving down through the sky  
I always knew that I wanted to fly.

### **9. Bangkok**

June 19 Bangkok  
The jungle swallows everything. Green, green, green everywhere.  
In New Guinea, Bought a dictionary. Two shillings.  
Stopped in a village. Lava mountains. Heat.  
Glad I did.  
The word for woman here is Marys.  
Imagine a whole town of Marys.  
A whole country of Marys. Am tired. So tired.

### **10. Mandalay**

Tommy Tommy Tommy left his Burma girl lazy at the sea.  
I can't get this song out of my mind.  
It plays all day and night.  
On the road to Mandalay where the flying fishes play.  
On the road to Mandalay where the flying fishes play.  
Who wrote that? Kipling? No. Where am I? I don't know.

There is something shining north north east.  
It is my plane. Her skin so smooth.  
She shines like an English biscuit tin.

### **11. New Guinea**

June 30 New Guinea  
Fred unable to set his chronometers stop.  
Personal unfitness stop.  
Wind blowing the wrong way stop.  
Looking bad for arrival in Oakland July 4 stop.

Did you know that in New Guinea the land is nothing but silt  
Held together by tangled vines  
Sometimes pieces break off and become islands  
and float like rafts out to sea out to sea.  
Now and then animals are trapped on them.  
Animals.

July 1 1937.

Tonight I'm looking westward over the Pacific.  
The whole width of the world has passed behind us except this broad ocean.  
The Electra is poised for her longest hop.  
Twenty five hundred miles across the open ocean.

Parachutes: Gone. Visibility: none.  
Wind: blowing the wrong way.

## **12. New Guinea**

After twenty nine days of flight, they landed in New Guinea.  
The remaining seven thousand miles would all be done over the Pacific  
On her last takeoff Earhart was headed for Howland island in the middle of the Pacific.  
The coast guard cutter Itasca posted near the island was assigned to guide her in.  
Take off was at dawn. Earhart estimated her chances of finding the island at about fifty fifty.

As she flew towards the island she was broadcasting but on the wrong frequency.  
The closer she got, the fainter her voice became.  
To make a sharper signal she began a series of loud whistles.  
But the mid Pacific was full of high frequency radio code and her signals were lost.

## **13. Radio**

Zero seven four zero

Electra calling Itasca. We must be on you but cannot see you.  
Itasca to Electra: Do not hear you. Repeat on 6210 kilocycles. 0742.  
Electra to Itasca Gas is low. No radio. We are flying at an altitude of 1000 feet.  
Itasca to Electra. Do not hear you on 6210. Do not hear you on 6210  
Repeat Itasca to Electra We are circling but cannot see you

Earhart to Itasca: We are flying at an altitude of one thousand feet  
Itasca to Earhart: Do not hear you. do not hear you. Repeat.

Earhart to Itasca: We are running out of fuel.  
We must be near you but cannot see you.  
Itasca to Earhart: Do not hear you.  
Broadcast on correct frequency 6210.

Earhart to Itasca: Will whistle into microphone.  
Itasca to Earhart: Do not hear you. Repeat.

Earhart to Itasca: We are running a line north and south.  
Cannot see you.  
Itasca to Earhart: Cannot hear you. Repeat.

Earhart to Itasca: Cannot see you. Cannot see you.  
Itasca to Earhart: Cannot hear you. Repeat.

Shining. My plane is shining like a lucky dime

My shadow on the water. It was the sound of the motor  
I remember the most.

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

**Thunderbolt P-47**, scherzo for orchestra H 309

### **BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ**

Born December 8, 1890 in Polička, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic)

Died August 28, 1959 in Liestal, Switzerland

In 1923, Bohuslav Martinů received a grant from the Czechoslovak minister for education to study composition with Albert Roussel in Paris. He left his homeland, which he would visit occasionally but never returned to permanently. During World War II, Martinů fled occupied France at the last moment and spent several years in the United States. After 1948, when communists took power in Czechoslovakia, Martinů lived in France, Italy and then in Switzerland, where he died. In 1979, his remains were returned to his native Polička.

In the United States, Martinů was received as an established composer. He regularly won commissions for new works, was kept busy composing and in summer taught at prestigious courses of composition. Despite these successes, he watched the developments in Europe, and particularly in his homeland, with a heavy heart. Most of his works written during the war years testify to his dark feelings. He welcomed the end of the war, therefore, with all the more satisfaction, and doubtless with a longing to return home...

The brief piece *Thunderbolt P-47* can be seen as a quirky celebration of the end of the war. "For a long time I had intended to write a short piece for orchestra", said Martinů, "but I was always preoccupied with my symphonies—I have written four during my stay in America, that is to say, one each year. That is why I welcomed the suggestion of my friend Hans Kindler with pleasure for composing a short work. I had thought of writing some dances or scherzo and I chose the latter form. At the time we were with my wife [Charlotte] at South Orleans on Cape Cod where I had just finished my Fourth Symphony which was just recently premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy on November 30 [1945]. I preserved the usual scherzo form with the trio and *da capo* and in September 1945 between swimming, fishing, and composing, I completed this work which I call *Thunderbolt—P-47*. The title was added after the completion of the music, for there is nothing descriptive in it, except for the animated movement which recalls the speed of the fighter planes which were continually flying over our heads at South Orleans and my private tribute to this type of plane which was of such assistance in ending this terrible war. The composition is dedicated to Hans Kindler".

Kindler premiered *Thunderbolt P-47* with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington on 19 December 1945, but Martinů was not able to attend, as he was sick with flu.

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**Othello**, concert overture for orchestra, Op. 93

### **ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK**

Born September 8 1841 in Nelahozeves, Austrian Empire (now Czech Republic)

Died May 5, 1904 in Prague, Austrian Empire (now Czech Republic)

Several momentous events occurred in Antonín Dvořák's life in 1891: early that year, he started teaching at the recently established composition department of the Prague Conservatory, in March he received an honorary doctorate from Prague University, in June he went to England, where he was ceremoniously made an honorary doctor of music at the University of Cambridge, and on 8 September he celebrated his 50th birthday with his family. Following a second trip to England in October, where his *Requiem* was performed in Birmingham for the first time, on Christmas Eve Dvořák signed a two-year contract with the National Conservatory of Music in New York; the agreement came into effect in autumn of the next year. In the meantime, from August he had been working on a trio of symphonic overtures, originally sharing a collective title, *Nature, Life and Love* and bearing the same opus number,

91. Having embraced Franz Liszt's neo-Romantic direction more closely than before, and having been particularly captivated by the Lisztian form of symphonic poem, in these overtures Dvořák addressed these three fundamental concepts of human existence.

Although Dvořák later removed the close connection between the works in the trilogy by revoking their collective title, and each of the pieces received its own name and opus number (*In Nature's Realm*, Op. 91; *Carnival*, Op. 92; and *Othello*, Op. 93), the overtures remained musically connected by a shared motif. The Shakespearean title of the third symphonic overture, which he worked on from 10 December 1891 to 18 January 1892, shows the type of love Dvořák had in mind while composing: a gentle sentiment that grows into powerful passion swayed by jealousy.

While the composer dedicated the first two overtures—the first to the University of Cambridge and the second to the Czech university in Prague—*Othello*, the longest prelude of the three, bore no dedication. The entire cycle was performed by the National Theatre Orchestra conducted by Dvořák at Prague's Rudolfinum on 28 April 1892.

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## **Amelia**

### **LAURIE ANDERSON**

Born June 5, 1947 in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, U.S.A.

Overcoming new challenges, made possible for humanity by ever improving technology, and the often tragic fates of the people involved, has long attracted the attention of artists. Looking back now on the early days of aviation, Bohuslav Martinů springs to mind with his 1927 mechanical ballet, *The Amazing Flight*, inspired by the unsuccessful attempt by French pilots Charles Nungesser and François Coli to cross the Atlantic in the same year.

Likewise, the story of Amelia Mary Earhart (1897–1937) invites artistic treatment. A record breaker who climbed in her aircraft to greater altitudes and flew faster than any woman before, in 1932 she conquered the Atlantic – again, the first woman to do so – and five years later planned a world flight. Initially, she wanted to set out on her own, but in the end, the navigator Fred Noonan joined her in the cockpit of the Lockheed L-10E Electra. At one stage of the flight, they lost radio contact with a US cutter. The further fates of the aircraft, the pilot and the navigator have since been the subject of theories, speculations and fabrications. Recently, in 2019, interest in Amelia was rekindled when the media carried the story that the well-known oceanographer Robert Ballard, who had previously discovered the wreckages of the Titanic, the battleship Bismarck and the ocean liner Lusitania, was searching for her plane. Yet as Ballard himself admitted, somewhat non-committally, “Perhaps some matters are not to be uncovered. We shall see whether Amelia is one of them.” Fortunately, art does not have to ask such questions. It reaches its truth by its own means.

“The words in *Amelia* were drawn from Earhart's pilot logs, telegrams she wrote to her husband George and my imagination of what a woman flying around the world might think,” wrote Laurie Anderson, making it clear that she conceived her composition not as a documentary work, but as a very subjective story about the fate of the celebrated pilot.

The work has a long history. The original version for a large orchestra was commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra and premiered as *Songs for A.E.* at Carnegie Hall in 2000 under the baton of Dennis Russell Davies, who later arranged it for strings and electric double bass and performed it with the Stuttgarter Kammerorchester in 2003. A third version, entitled *Amelia*, was prepared especially for the Brno performance in 2019 (Filharmonie Brno conducted by Dennis Russell Davies) and features several new parts – duets by Laurie Anderson (electric violin and electronics) and a cellist Rubin Kodheli – that serve as interludes.

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