

Ann's Historical Fiction #6

11/01/23

NaNoWriMo

Why I am writing this in October!

Another year has gone by and I just signed up for the National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo; www.nanowrimo.org) for my 12th year!

For those awaiting beta reads, it might be a while. Thanks for your patience.

For those unfamiliar with NaNoWriMo, it works like this, at least in November. You write. And write and write. For most, the goal is to write 50,000 words in 30 days. No excuses. However, there are now other options, particularly time-based ones, for people working on revising novels. In general, though, people work on new material. However, it's okay to be a NaNo rebel and work on whatever you want.

The goal is to have fun and to write. That's it. And if you don't make 50,000? So what? You've written. You've at least started. You've gotten an idea and ran with it, at least for a yard or two. It's all good.

After NaNo ends on Nov. 30, I take a break from that novel, finished or not, and work on other material. Between January and March, as I work on other things, I think about the next NaNo project and choose a topic. From April to Halloween, I research that project. On November 1, the writing begins. See the next page for a description of my planned 2023 NaNo project.

Genre: Historical fiction, with a bit of fantasy thrown in for good measure.



Looking for an illustrator

Nonprofit work

Last spring, for Camp NaNo (run in April and July), I wrote a children's book. It's part of my work with my nonprofit, Science is Elemental. Scienceiselemental.blog

The goal was to write a book that showed how a scientist works, not just what science they explore. However, I can't even draw stick figures well, so I am looking for an illustrator.

If you know of someone willing to volunteer their time (with credit as illustrator and a share of any profits that may ever come from publishing), please let me know.

Florence Price and Antonin Dvorak

Florence Price was the first black woman to have one of her compositions, a symphony in E minor, played by a major orchestra. She lived a difficult life as a black woman, single mother, and composer in the early to mid-20th century.

So why am I writing about her, and what does this have to do with Czech composer Antonin Dvorak?

Dvorak's famous New World Symphony, written while he was in residence in New York, is also in E minor, and Price's symphony is in that key because of her interest in his work.

As one can imagine, she lived in difficult times. For black people who were light-skinned enough, as she possibly was, there was a temptation to pass as white. For good reading on this topic, consider the novel "Passing", by Nella Larsen.

There is reasonable evidence that Price considered doing so. In her first two years at conservatory, she listed her hometown as Little Rock, AR, where she was born. But her third and final year, she listed it as Pueblo, Mexico. Some Black people who attempted to pass as white did so as white Hispanics.

Price clearly made the choice not to pass as white. My novel, though, explores the possibility that she chose the other way. To add a twist, just as Dvorak came to the U.S., I will have Price go to Czechoslovakia. There, in the run up to WWII, she will encounter Jews attempting to pass as Christians to avoid the terrors of the Nazi power. It's a novel about being someone you are not, to avoid dire consequences. We'll see how it goes.

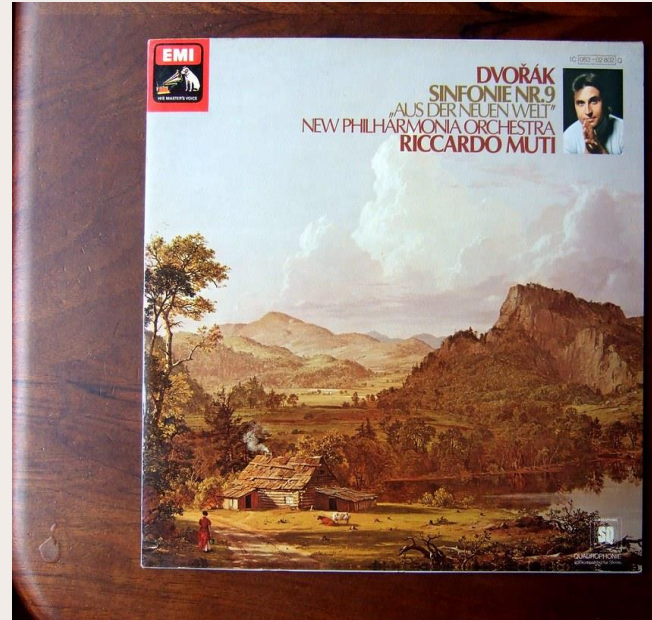
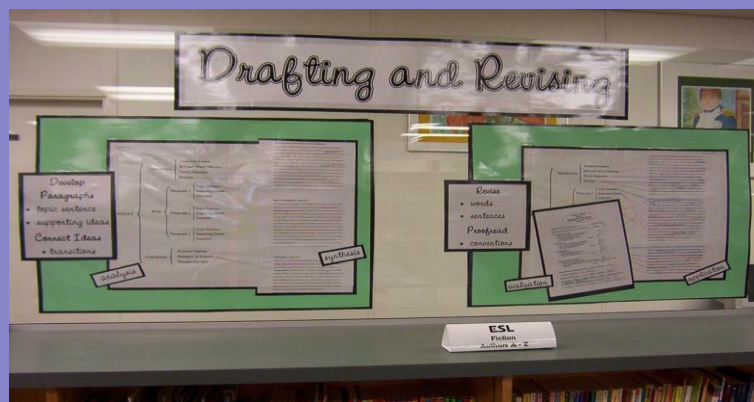


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A Romance

Shifting to higher positions

I am now playing a romance by Ferdinand Hummel. One of the reasons for choosing this piece is that it requires a lot of shifting to higher positions.

What does that mean? On a violin, first position requires no shifting. The notes that can be reached are those, on any of the four strings, which can be reached by any of the four fingers from the bottom-most position (closest to the scroll) on the fingerboard—the long black piece of wood in the picture to the right.

To play higher notes beyond what can be reached by the fourth finger on the E string (the string closest to the top edge of the picture and the one that allows the highest notes) one has to shift one's hand from first position to others further up the keyboard toward the main part of the violin.

Note that there are no frets on a violin—no lines to show where the notes are. Shifting to the correct position requires practice and ear training to learn, by sound, where to move one's left hand.

Choosing which position to move to depends on the notes before and after, whether one wants to play on an open string (not pressing any part of it to make the notes E, A, D, or G) and how well the piece fits in the hand. Hand frame—understanding where the fingers are needed to be for particular keys and positions matters, too.

It's complicated.

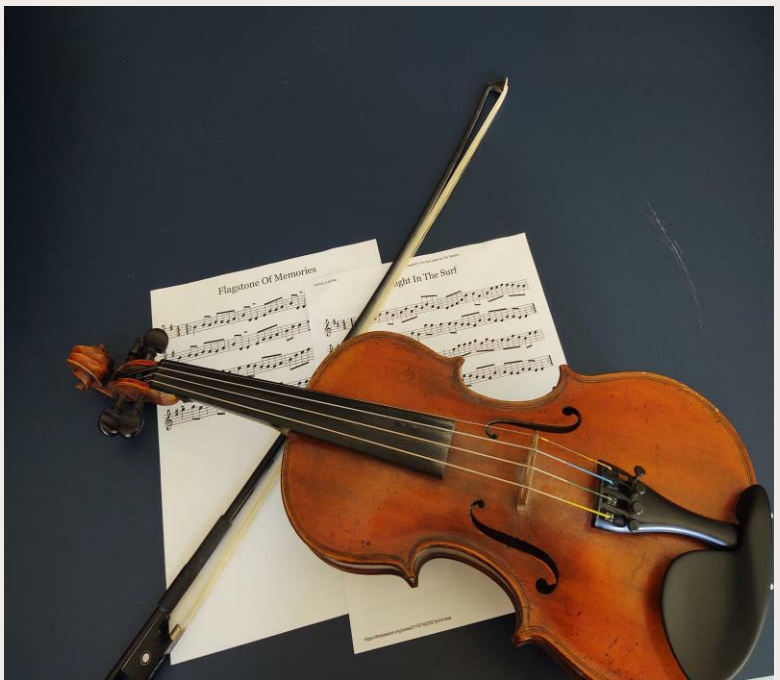


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