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# DVOŘÁK

## GREATEST MELODIES

ARRANGED AND PERFORMED BY  
PETER BREINER, PIANO

**Antonín  
DVOŘÁK**  
(1841–1904)

**GREATEST MELODIES**

<b>1</b>	<b>Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 81, B. 155 – II. Dumka (1887)</b>	<b>2:15</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 5, B. 28 – II. Andante sostenuto (1872)</b>	<b>3:13</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Večerní písně, Op. 31 ('Evening Songs') – No. 2. Vy malí, drobní ptáčkové ('You little, tiny birds'), B. 61, No. 8 (1876)</b>	<b>1:39</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Slavonic Dance No. 10 in E minor, Op. 72, B. 145, No. 2 (1886)</b>	<b>2:00</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Romance in F minor, Op. 11, B. 38 (1877)</b>	<b>2:12</b>
	<b>Serenade in E major, Op. 22, B. 52 (1875) (excerpts)</b>	<b>8:00</b>
<b>6</b>	I. Moderato	2:49
<b>7</b>	II. Tempo di valse	2:51
<b>8</b>	IV. Larghetto	2:17
	<b>Serenade in D minor, Op. 44, B. 77 (1878) (excerpts)</b>	<b>4:36</b>
<b>9</b>	I. Moderato quasi marcia	2:27
<b>10</b>	II. Menuetto	2:07
	<b>Piano Trio No. 4 in E minor, Op. 90, B. 166 'Dumky' (1891) (excerpts)</b>	<b>9:05</b>
<b>11</b>	II. Poco adagio	2:56
<b>12</b>	III. Andante (Part I)	1:33
<b>13</b>	III. Andante (Part II)	1:55
<b>14</b>	IV. Andante moderato (quasi tempo di marcia)	2:36
	<b>Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88, B. 163 (1889) (excerpts)</b>	<b>13:09</b>
<b>15</b>	I. Allegro con brio	2:46
<b>16</b>	II. Adagio (Part I)	2:10
<b>17</b>	II. Adagio (Part II)	3:32
<b>18</b>	III. Allegretto grazioso	2:10
<b>19</b>	IV. Allegro ma non troppo	2:24

	<b>Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95, B. 178 ‘From the New World’ (1893) (excerpts)</b>	<b>10:17</b>
20	I. Adagio	2:49
21	I. Allegro molto	2:01
22	II. Largo	3:15
23	IV. Allegro con fuoco	2:07
	<b>Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53, B. 96 (1879) (excerpts)</b>	<b>5:48</b>
24	II. Adagio ma non troppo	1:58
25	III. Finale: Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo (Part I)	1:55
26	III. Finale: Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo (Part II)	1:52
27	<b>Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104, B. 191 – I. Allegro (1895)</b>	<b>2:49</b>
28	<b>String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96, B. 179 ‘American’ – II. Lento (1893)</b>	<b>2:11</b>
29	<b>Rondo in G minor, Op. 94, B. 171 (1891)</b>	<b>2:57</b>
	<b>String Quintet in E flat major, Op. 97, B. 180 (1893) (excerpts)</b>	<b>4:55</b>
30	II. Allegro vivo	1:40
31	III. Larghetto	3:14
32	<b>Zigeunermelodien, Op. 55, B. 104 – No. 4. Als die alte Mutter (‘Songs My Mother Taught Me’) (1880)</b>	<b>1:57</b>
33	<b>Rusalka, Op. 114, B. 203 – Act I: Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém (‘Song to the Moon’) (1900)</b>	<b>3:37</b>

**Peter Breiner, Piano**

All works arranged for piano by Peter Breiner (2020)

## Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) Greatest Melodies

Born in a Bohemian village in 1841 as the eldest of nine children, Antonín Dvořák showed a gift for melody as soon as he began writing music. It was initially thought he would follow in his father's footsteps as a butcher and innkeeper, but by the age of 16, with his family's support, he was able to further his musical education in Prague. A budding violinist, viola player and organist, he studied the music of German composers through performance, eventually joining the orchestra of the Czech Provisional Theatre.

Dvořák kept his own counsel with his early compositions, sharing them only with his closest friends, but soon his works were heard further afield. Initially his music was in thrall to Liszt and Wagner, but the influence of fellow Czech Bedřich Smetana spoke profoundly, and he resolved to follow his compatriot's pride in expressing the music of his own country.

The two shared a love of landscapes, in particular forests, but while Dvořák attributed Czech music to Smetana, he resolved that his own music was Slavic. Smetana used operatic means of expression; Dvořák took more formal designs, writing nine symphonies, fifteen string quartets, four piano trios and many other works for orchestra and chamber ensemble. The voice assumed greater importance in his output, and the *Moravian Duets* – published as *Op. 32* in 1876 – were given to the German publisher Nikolaus Simrock by Brahms, a consistent supporter of Dvořák's talent. Simrock commissioned two sets of *Slavonic Dances* as the start of a long and fruitful relationship.

Dvořák's tuneful writing has captured the imagination of arrangers, influencing the composer and arranger Peter Breiner to write his own set of 16 symphonic *Slovak Dances*. Breiner is an expert hand in arrangements for orchestra, as well as piano, and chooses here a set of 33 melodies for simple yet revealing piano reductions. These give the listener an opportunity to journey with Dvořák through his career in Prague and ultimately overseas to America.

Before impressing Brahms and ultimately Simrock, Dvořák completed an early *Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 5* in 1872, with an attractive Schumannesque quality to its slow movement. A second *Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 81*, completed 15 years later, begins this collection with a richly adorned melody, part of a second movement 'dumka'. This term has Ukrainian origins, used by Dvořák to describe a piece with dance-infused sections, contrasting slow and fast speeds. The slow sections often have melancholic thoughts, while the fast are more spirited.

Early in his career Dvořák was also writing smaller-scale orchestral works. The tender *Romance in F minor, Op. 11*, a popular encore piece for violin and orchestra from 1877, has a deceptively simple melody with an attractive, triple-time lilt. At the same time Dvořák explored the serenade, a form successfully championed by Brahms. The *Serenade in E major, Op. 22* for strings of 1875 has an airy first theme first heard in the piano's right hand (violins), immediately echoed in the left (cellos). The second movement waltz dances freely, its nostalgic tones afforded a Chopin-like grace in the piano reduction. The wistful *Larghetto*, fourth of the five movements, has a graceful theme allowing time for reflection. The *Serenade in D minor, Op. 44* for wind is more obviously Slavonic, beginning with a bold *Moderato* march. The second movement is a genial *Menuetto*, its attractive woodwind textures transcribing freely for piano.

Dvořák's works for voice and piano remain ripe for discovery. *Vy malí, drobní ptáčkové* ('You little, tiny birds') is a good example, its lyricism supported by a Schubertian accompanying figure. *Als die alte Mutter* ('Songs My Mother Taught Me') is better known, the centre of a seven-part cycle *Zigeunermelodien* ('Gypsy Melodies'). Its nostalgic melody mourns a youth lost forever.

With the *Slavonic Dances* Dvořák wrote for an international market. His first set of eight, published as *Op. 46* in 1878, were so successful that Simrock demanded a sequel. A further set of followed as *Op. 72* in 1886, containing

a dance in E minor that explores a deeply emotive melancholy, using expansive octaves in the piano's right hand.

Dvořák's last three symphonies are especially popular in the concert hall, with few more freely inventive than the bright and breezy *Symphony No. 8* of 1889, which celebrates the Bohemian countryside. The first movement's soulful theme alternates between minor and major key, while the light-hearted exchanges of the second movement are worked out between the hands at the piano, before a rousing account of Slavonic motifs. The graceful poise of the slow movement suggests the influence of Schubert's ballet *Rosamunde*, while the finale turns for home with a spring in its step.

By this time Dvořák was looking to write music more reflective of his Czech origins, culminating in the composition of a piano trio known as the '*Dumky*'. This four-movement work broke with tradition by using a *dumka* for each movement, an approach which proved popular on its Prague premiere in April 1891. The four excerpts from this work capture the longing stillness of the *Poco adagio* second movement, then the richly ornamented melody and contemplative mood of the third movement *Andante*. From the finale Breiner extracts a darker melody of more obviously Slavonic character.

Dvořák left his homeland for America in 1892, at the invitation of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. He stayed for the best part of three years, completing a number of works that met with widespread approval. These included the last of his nine symphonies, the '*New World*', a cosmopolitan work combining original invention with real or appropriated quotes from African American and Native American songs. Simultaneously a postcard to his homeland and a celebration of new surroundings, it is characterised by melodies using the pentatonic scale.

The symphony is packed with memorable content. Even its *Adagio* introduction, which would be functional in many hands, has a distinctive tune. However, the most memorable melody is reserved for the second movement *Largo*, a tender cor anglais utterance embodying longing and nostalgia. By contrast the fourth movement is a bracing finale.

Dvořák moved from New York to a Czech settlement in Spillville, Iowa, in 1893. In an especially productive month, he wrote the *String Quartet in F major, Op. 96* (the '*American*') and a second *String Quintet in E flat major, Op. 97*. While working on the latter piece a group of Native Americans visited, and Dvořák was inspired by the pentatonic melodies used in their tribal dances. The slow movement of the quartet is notable for its soulful cello solo, while the quintet has a deceptively catchy tune in its *scherzo*. The third movement *Larghetto*, meanwhile, provokes deeper thoughts.

Dvořák's music for solo instrument and orchestra has aged well. The *Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53* has gained popularity in recent decades, which would have satisfied a composer whose work was criticised by celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim. The thoughtful melody from the work's slow movement contrasts nicely with brighter aspirations in the finale, where the right hand of the piano enjoys Dvořák's rustic writing for violin.

Dvořák had a special affinity with the cello, with the *Cello Concerto* of 1895 a concert hall favourite. Its soulful melodies have long been treasured, few more than the second theme of the first movement. Four years prior the composer was flexing his muscles with the *Rondo in G minor, Op. 94* for cello and piano, the 'rondo' form enabling the catchy tune to reappear frequently.

Dvořák's ten operas are little known, apart from the enduring tale of *Rusalka*. The opera tells the story of the water nymph Rusalka, who falls in love with a prince who comes to swim in her lake. Entranced, she wishes to become a human, and calls on the moon to tell the prince of her love. She does this in the famous *Song to the Moon*, Dvořák's most prized operatic aria.

## Peter Breiner

Conductor, pianist, composer, arranger and writer Peter Breiner (b. 1957) is one of the world's most played musicians (over 200 albums and more than 2 million records sold).

Peter Breiner is a graduate of the Košice Conservatory (piano, composition, conducting, percussion) and the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, where he was among one of the last students of Alexander Moyzes. Between 1992 to 2007 he lived in Toronto, Canada, then moved to New York where among other things he became the curator and producer of the popular series of chamber concerts known as *Sounds of Serendipity*.

Breiner has conducted – often while playing the piano – renowned orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lille, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Symphony Orchestra, Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and many others in Slovakia, Europe, Asia and North America. His commercially most successful projects are Baroque arrangements of well-known tunes – *Beatles Go Baroque* (Vol. 1: 8.990050, Vol. 2: 8574078), *Elvis Goes Baroque* (8.990054) and *Christmas Goes Baroque I* (8.550301) and *II* (8.550670).

Breiner's arrangements of national anthems have been used at the Olympic Games, and he has recorded the complete national anthems of the world for Naxos, spanning ten volumes. His most recent Naxos releases have been the three volume series of *Calm Romantic Piano Music* (Vol. 1: 8.574256, Vol. 2: 8.574257 and Vol. 3: 8.574474) and the album *Slovak Dances, Naughty and Sad* (8.574184-85). Previous releases include an album of orchestral adaptations of works by Mussorgsky (*Pictures at an Exhibition, Songs and Dances of Death, The Nursery*, 8.573016) and Tchaikovsky (suites from the operas *Voyevoda* and *The Queen of Spades*, 8.573015), which were recorded with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra under Breiner's baton. His albums of Janáček opera arrangements (Naxos) won worldwide acclaim and excellent ratings in prestigious music magazines and the world press – *Gramophone* magazine and the *Chicago Tribune* ranked the album among the top ten discs of 2009.

Breiner's compositions and arrangements are performed day-to-day at concerts around the world and broadcast by hundreds of radio stations. Breiner has scored many films, including Slovak, Canadian and American productions such as *Anne of Green Gables, The Pianist's Daughter*, and *The Magic Flute*. Leading ballet ensembles such as the American Ballet Theatre, The Royal Ballet and Houston Ballet, among others and has also appeared frequently in popular American television programmes.

[www.peterbreiner.com](http://www.peterbreiner.com)



Photo:  
Gulnara Samojlova

Antonín Dvořák's gift for melody was apparent as soon as he began writing music, and this naturally tuneful inspiration has long captured the imagination of arrangers. An expert in arranging for both orchestra and piano, Peter Breiner has selected 33 melodies in simple yet revealing piano reductions that give the listener an opportunity to journey with Dvořák through his career in Prague and ultimately overseas to America. This carefully curated programme also brings moods ranging from rustic celebration to nostalgic melancholy, and from traditional Czech *dumka* dances to the famous *Song to the Moon*, Dvořák's most prized operatic aria.

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A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet

All works arranged for piano by Peter Breiner (2020)

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