



AUDIOPHILE EDITION

SMETANA

Má vlast

St. Louis Symphony Orchestra
Walter Susskind



Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) Má vlast (My Fatherland)

While Antonín Dvořák is generally recognised as the greatest of all Czech composers, it is Smetana the Czechs themselves revere as the musical personification of their national spirit, and whom the world acknowledges as the founder of modern Czech music. And it was in *Má vlast*, the unprecedented cycle of six related symphonic poems, that Smetana most strikingly fulfilled his pre-ordained role as the bardic patriarch who awakened a nation to glory with its own reflection in sound.

These observations inevitably bring to mind two ironic circumstances. The first, of course, is that these ‘reflections in sound’ were created by a musician who was totally deaf – and had, in fact, just been dealt that shattering blow when he undertook the work. The other is that Smetana until his last years had to contend with opposition from conservative elements among his compatriots, who felt he allowed himself to be too much influenced by Liszt, Wagner, and other foreign musicians. In 1865, when Smetana’s application for the position of Director of the Prague Conservatory was rejected, one of the objections stated was his tendency ‘to proceed with the composition of symphonic poems in the same direction as Liszt. This is basically suspect and can only provoke more enemies’. Josef Krejčí, to whom the directorship was awarded, tirelessly denounced both Liszt and Wagner as the worst examples a serious student could follow. (About 15 years later, with all of his major works completed, Smetana declared: ‘Absolute music is impossible for me in any genre. My compositions do not belong to the realm of absolute music, where one can get along well enough with musical signs and a metronome.’)

Smetana, who was born in the Bohemian border town of Litomyšl on 2 March 1824, and died in Prague on 12 May 1884, was not the first composer to interest himself in a national music for the Czechs. František Škroup (1801–1862) composed the first native Bohemian opera with an original Czech libretto, *Dráteník* (‘The Tinker’), just after Smetana was born, and one of his stage works, *Fidlovačka* (‘The Fiddler’), contained a song that became so well-loved that it was mistaken for a folk-tune and eventually became the Czech national anthem, *Kde domov můj?* (‘Where is my home?’ – the theme is quoted in Dvořák’s overture *My Home*). Smetana’s contemporary Pavel Křížkovský (1820–1885) composed a number of successful Czech songs and choruses, some of which incorporated actual folk themes while others were cast in the folk style using original themes. Škroup’s works did not endure, and the few other efforts in the direction of a native Czech opera, such as František Bedřich Kott’s *Žižka’s Oak* (1841), met with little success. Most of the influential musicians in Prague through the third quarter of the 19th century were men of conservative background and narrow vision. Visits by Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner served to loosen some of the old conservatism, but did nothing to foster a native music. As Brian Large, Smetana’s distinguished English biographer, observes: ‘Prague may have worshipped Mozart, acclaimed Berlioz, toasted Liszt and applauded Wagner, but it thirsted for music of its own. People began to look to the folk-song for salvation, but it was no guarantee of establishing a distinct national school of composition. It served as a punitive weapon against foreign influence; but no great art grew from its seeds. Only one man was able to cut a path out of the wilderness and transform Czech music into the vehicle of cultural and national ideas. This was Bedřich Smetana.’ (The passage just quoted is from the author’s introduction to *Smetana*, by Brian Large, © 1970 in London, England, by Brian Large. Excerpted and reprinted by permission of Praeger Publishers, Inc., New York).

Smetana's first large-scale attempt to create a Czech national music was the ambitious opera he composed in a period lasting from 1862 to 1863, *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia (Braniboři v Čechách)*, with a libretto by Karel Sabina similar in outline to the Pushkin drama adapted by Mussorgsky for his *Boris Godunov*. While awaiting the first production of *The Brandenburgers*, which did not come about until January 1866, Smetana composed a contrasting comic work, also with a libretto by Sabina, that surpassed any of his other compositions for the stage, both in sheer musical worth and as a musical picture of Czech life. In fact, *Prodaná nevěsta*, known in English as *The Bartered Bride*, became the Czech national epic. Even though its subject matter is anything but epic in scale – it is rather an idealisation of life in rural Bohemia that evokes, in Rosa Newmarch's words, a 'warm and happy atmosphere, bright with mirth, a place of sunshine and hearty good humour.'

The Bartered Bride was first produced in its original form on 20 May 1866 (it was to be revised three times by 1870); it brought Smetana such enthusiastic recognition that in September of that year he was elected principal conductor of the Provisional Theatre in Prague. In May 1868 it was he who laid the foundation stone of the new National Theatre, and in the same month his third opera, *Dalibor*, based on a Czech legend, had its premiere. *Dalibor* was condemned for its 'Wagnerism', but the condemnation was based in large part on jealousies and intrigues in Prague musical circles, for by then there was little question of Smetana's pre-eminent position among his colleagues. In 1872 he completed a still more ambitious opera, this one very much an epic, on the national legend of Libuše, the princess who prophesied the rise and indestructibility of the Czech nation. *Libuše*, designated by Smetana for performance 'on the memorial days that touch the Czech people as a nation', was not produced until 1881; in the years between its completion and its first staging Smetana composed *Má vlast*, which is in a sense the orchestral counterpart to – and extension of – the opera.

The years in which *Má vlast* was composed were the most difficult Smetana had to endure, for on 20 October 1874 (the date familiar to music-oriented Americans as that of the birth of Charles Ives), he found himself suddenly stone deaf. Beethoven had suffered deafness at a younger age, but it had come upon him more gradually; Smetana had had little warning, and there were no treatments or devices that were of any help. He was 50, and perhaps he had written enough – a fifth opera, *Dvě vdovy* ('Two Widows'), in addition to those already named, many piano works, the *Piano Trio in G minor*, the symphonic poems composed in Sweden in the manner of Liszt. It would have been understandable, surely, if he had abandoned the thought of further work, of writing music he could hear only in his mind; but he persevered with the ambitious orchestral project he had undertaken, saw it through to completion as the greatest of all tonal edifices erected in honour of the Czech nation, completed three more operas, several choruses, his two string quartets, and three charming sets of piano pieces, and then began another orchestral cycle, of which he was able to complete only the opening number (*Prague Carnival*), and another opera (*Viola*, based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*). Exhausted, Smetana ended his days in an asylum; on the eve of his funeral and his burial in Prague's Vyšehrad Cemetery *The Bartered Bride* was performed at the National Theatre.

That theatre had been destroyed by fire in 1881, 17 years after Smetana had laid its foundation stone, and when the reconstruction was completed it reopened on 4 November 1882, with the first integral performance of *Má vlast*, conducted by Adolf Čech. The triumph was recorded by Václav Zelený in his biography of Smetana: 'Since the opening of the National Theatre there has never been such an exalted mood among any Czech assembly. The solemn chords of *Vyšehrad*... raised us to such a degree of enthusiasm that immediately after its moving conclusion the cry 'Smetana!' rang from the hundreds who were there. After *Vltava* a hurricane of applause broke loose and his name resounded on every side amidst cheers... Everyone rose to his feet and the same unending storm of applause was repeated after each of the six parts... At the end of *Blaník* the audience was beside itself and the people could not bring themselves to take leave of the composer.'

The event thus described took place about a decade after Smetana had made his first sketches for *Vyšehrad*, which, like portions of *Má vlast* (particularly *Tábor* and *Blaník*), is directly related to *Libuše*. Although *Vyšehrad* was sketched at the time the opera was being completed (1872), Smetana did not get to work on it in earnest for some time; he completed it four weeks after the onset of his deafness (18 November 1874), and it was first performed on 14 March 1875. (Not only were the first four segments of *Má vlast* premiered individually, but it was not until all four had been performed that Smetana decided to expand his original concept of a tetralogy to a six-part cycle. It was later still that the possessive pronoun was added to the original title, which had been simply *Vlast* – ‘Fatherland’.)

In *Má vlast*, which he dedicated to the city of Prague, Smetana undertook to celebrate the various aspects of Czech life – folklore and legend, national pride, the land itself and its rivers, forests, and hills. The first part is an evocation of ancient glories, and for that Smetana could not have chosen a more fitting symbol than Vyšehrad, as emblematic of the Czech nation as the lime-tree itself. The towering rock called by that name is an awesome sight, rising steeply from the Vltava at the point at which the river flows into Prague; its height is formidable, its only ornamentation the ruin of an old fort on the site of the ancient castle sacred to Czech legend. It was at Vyšehrad, long before a castle was built in Prague itself, that Princess Libuše had her prophetic vision of the nation’s rise, and it was here that Lumír the bard sang his ballads.

In a letter to his publisher, Urbánek, written in late May 1879, Smetana outlined the programmatic significance of each of the component works of *Má vlast*. Of *Vyšehrad* he wrote: ‘The harps of the bards begin; a bard sings of the events that have taken place on Vyšehrad, of the glory, the splendor, the tournaments and battles, and finally of its downfall and ruin. The composition ends on an elegiac note’. The ‘Vyšehrad’ theme in this work was taken more or less directly from the second act of *Libuše*, in which it accompanies the words ‘You shall ride triumphantly through the arch of Vyšehrad on a white horse,’ sung by Radovan to Přemysl, Libuše’s future husband. The theme was apparently adapted from one Smetana had originally used in his 1857 piano fantasy *Cid and Ximene* (after Herder’s epic poem *Der Cid*). Smetana himself liked to point out that the opening notes of *Vyšehrad* are the initials of his own name – ‘B’ and ‘Es’ being the German designations of the notes B flat and E flat, respectively.

It may be noted that the third of Dvořák’s three *Slavonic Rhapsodies*, *Op. 45*, composed in 1878, opens with a harp solo, in the same manner as *Vyšehrad*, and that Smetana, in a letter of 23 December 1879, suggested to a friend that the younger composer (who had played viola in the National Theatre under his direction some years earlier) had copied the effect from him: ‘But as his works have appeared in print before mine, I shall be the one to be called plagiarist.’ And so he was, by opponents unmindful of the chronology of the respective works, for *Vyšehrad* was not published until 1881.

In the piece following *Vyšehrad*, which was to become the best known of all Smetana’s works for orchestra, the composer celebrates neither monumental figures nor great events, but Nature, in this case exemplified by the course of the river Vltava (better known by its German name, Moldau). Smetana’s friend Mořic Anger (1844–1905, violinist and conductor) traced the inspiration for *Vltava* to an outing they and another friend, Ludevít Procházka (1837–1884, journalist and critic), made on 28 August 1867, while staying at Anger’s parents’ place in the Sumava Valley. Anger recounted to his biographer R.G. Kronbauer that the idea had come to Smetana amid the brooks and streams, at the spot where the Vydra and the Otava flow together: ‘Here he heard the gentle poetic song of the two rippling streams. He stood there deep in thought. He sat down, stayed motionless as though in a trance. Looking around the enchantingly lovely countryside he followed the Otava, accompanying it in spirit to the spot where it joins the Vltava, and within him sounded the first chords of the two motifs which intertwine and increase and later grow and swell into a mighty melodic stream.’

Three years later, in his diary for 14 August 1870, Smetana himself recorded a further impetus: ‘Today I took an excursion to the Saint John Rapids where I sailed in a boat through the huge waves at high water: the view of the landscape on either side was both beautiful and grand.’ While the motivation for a descriptive piece about the Vltava thus antedates even the first sketches for *Vyšehrad*, Smetana did not begin actual work on Vltava until 20 November 1874, two days after completing *Vyšehrad*. The work went extremely quickly, and was completed in just three weeks; the first performance was given in Prague on 4 April 1875, again just three weeks after that of *Vyšehrad*. As preface to the published score Smetana provided his own detailed description of the scenes he hoped to evoke in the music.

‘Two springs gush forth in the shade of the Bohemian forest, the one warm and spouting, the other cool and tranquil. Their waves joyously rushing down over their rock beds unite and glisten in the rays of the morning sun. The forest brook fast hurrying on becomes the river Vltava, which flowing ever on through Bohemia’s valleys grows to be a mighty stream: it flows through thick woods in which the joyous noise of the hunt and the notes of the hunter’s horn are heard ever nearer and nearer; it flows through grass-grown pastures and lowlands, where a wedding feast is celebrated with song and dancing. At night the wood and water nymphs revel in its shining waves, in which many fortresses and castles are reflected as witnesses of the past glory of knighthood and the vanished war-like fame of bygone ages. At the Saint John Rapids the stream rushes on, weaving through the cataracts, and with its foamy waves beats a path for itself through the rocky chasm into the broad river in which it flows on in majestic repose toward Prague, welcomed by time-honoured Vyšehrad, whereupon it vanishes in the far distance from the poet’s gaze.’

A resemblance has been remarked between the principal theme of *Vltava* and that of *Hatikvah*, the national anthem of Israel, leading to an assumption that both works were derived from the same source. This, however, is not the case, nor is it true, as has also been supposed, that the theme is a Czech folk-song – though it has more or less become one: children in the Czech Republic sing a nursery rhyme to the tune (‘The cat crawls through the hole, and the dog through the window’). The theme of this Czech classic happens to be a Swedish folk-song, which was used in F.A. Dahlgren’s play *The People of Värmland* in 1846. Smetana actually knew the playwright during his years in Sweden (Dahlgren’s sister-in-law was Smetana’s pupil in Gothenburg); he may not have been acquainted with the collection of folk material in which Dahlgren’s collaborator Randel found the tune, but, as Brian Large observes, ‘almost certainly he knew Dahlgren’s play and the most popular song in it: Ack Värmeland du sköna.’ ‘40 or 50 years ago this Swedish song in its original form was even sung in American schools as ‘Oh Vermeland Thou Lovely.’

While the first two parts of *Má vlast* were awaiting performance Smetana composed the third part. *Šárka* was begun in January 1875 and completed on 25 February; it was not performed, however, until 17 March 1877, by which time part four, *From Bohemia’s Woods and Fields*, had already been introduced. It is in *Šárka*, the shortest of the cycle’s six parts, that Smetana’s mastery in writing for the orchestra is most strikingly evident, and it is this section, too, that is the most graphically descriptive.

Visitors to Prague even now may have their attention drawn to a rock-strewn valley in the vicinity of Ruzyně Airport that is called *Šárka* and looks like the setting for a wild horror story – which is just what it was, according to legend. The woman for whom that valley is named was a Bohemian Amazon who led a rebellion against the rule of man. Far from abhorring the role of ‘sex object’, however, she made use of her extraordinary beauty as a weapon in her fight – not for mere equality with males, but for outright female supremacy. Her motivation was not of the noblest sort, either. In his explanatory letter to Urbánek, Smetana described the third part of *Má vlast* as follows.

‘This poem depicts not the landscape but the legend of the maiden *Šárka*. In the beginning is a depiction of *Šárka*, enraged by her lover’s infidelity and swearing vengeance on the entire male race, as her Amazon companions pledge their support. From afar is heard the arrival of armed men led by Ctirad, on their way to where they intend to conquer

and punish the rebel maidens. In the distance Ctirad hears a girl's cries for help, and on investigating he finds Šárka, who has been tied to a tree by her accomplices as a ruse to entrap him. Šárka's beauty so inflames Ctirad that he falls in love with her as he sets her free. She then offers him and his men a refreshing drink, but it is a potion which first intoxicates them and then quickly puts them to sleep. Šárka then sounds her hunting-horn, and her Amazon warriors rush from their hiding places amid the rocks to commit their bloody deed. The horror of the pitiless slaughter and the passionate fury of Šárka in satisfying her thirst for vengeance constitute the finale of this composition.'

The love scene in *Šárka* contains 'pre-echoes' of Strauss at his most voluptuous, and the final pages may be said to foreshadow that composer's *Elektra*. (Strauss, incidentally, was the first to conduct *Má vlast* as a complete cycle in Germany.) The warriors' drunkenness is limned in a distorted polka, and their snoring is realistically suggested by the contra-bassoon. (Of this passage, Smetana remarked: 'I don't think it will produce a comical effect, but if it does, no matter; I wanted it to be drastic.') Following that, as Brian Large observes, Smetana 'captures the sense of evil preceding Šárka's treacherous onslaught, and by skilfully employing the dark colours of the woodwind in their lowest register with ominous tremolandos he evokes the foreboding of destruction.'

From Bohemia's Woods and Fields (Z českých luhů a hájů), begun on 3 June 1875 (after both *Vyšehrad* and *Vltava* had been performed), was completed on 18 October of the same year and first performed on 10 December 1876. This work, like *Vltava*, is a celebration of Nature in its peculiarly magical Bohemian connotations; it is no conventional 'nature piece', but perhaps the most forward looking part of this cycle. Smetana described it as follows.

'This is a painting of the feelings that fill one when gazing at the Bohemian landscape. On all sides singing, both gay and melancholic, resounds from fields and woods: the forest regions, depicted on the solo horn; the gay, fertile lowlands of the Elbe valley are the subject of rejoicing. Everyone may draw his own picture according to his own imagination; for the poet has an open path before him, even though he must follow the individual parts of the work.'

As noted earlier, Smetana had originally conceived *Má vlast* as a series of four symphonic poems, not six, and his decision to add the final two sections was only after the first four had been successfully performed (but only individually, not yet as a collective unit). He noted in a letter to C. Maria Savenau on 19 November 1877, 'I have completed in these three years of deafness more than I had otherwise done in ten... I have written the tetralogy for large orchestra with the title *Vlast*... these pieces have been performed in Prague with unexpected success, and the great climax in the coda of *From Bohemia's Woods and Fields* is persuading me not to finish here, but to enlarge the cycle with other movements.'

Tábor and *Blaník* were both begun in the summer of 1878; *Tábor* was completed on 13 December 1878, *Blaník* on 9 March 1879, and both works were introduced on 4 January 1880, at a concert in Prague celebrating Smetana's 50th year of musical activity. Both of these works – constituting a dual epilogue, as it were – go directly to the living heart and soul of the Czech nation, to the most exalted symbols of the unique mixture of tragedy and fairy tale that echoes through the history and folklore of that proud people.

In 1415 the Bohemian patriot and religious reformer Jan Hus (John Hus – Johannes Hus von Husinetz) went to a church council at Konstanz under a guarantee of safe conduct; when he arrived he was put in chains and burned at the stake for heresy. His followers then made the southern Bohemian town of Tábor their stronghold and were thereafter referred to alternately as 'Hussites' or 'Táborites'. Their stern hymn *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* ('Ye who are warriors of God') became a rallying cry of Czech freedom, and it is this theme that is the melodic basis of both of the concluding sections of *Má vlast*, which Smetana directed should always be performed together (though any of the preceding four movements might be played independently).

Smetana had already used this magnificent chorale in the opera *Libuše*: it is to this music that Libuše proclaims her triumphal vision and prophecy in the final scene. The hymn had also been sung in various ceremonies over which the composer had presided since his return from Sweden in 1862. Numerous other Czech composers have since made use of it in their music, most notably Dvořák, in his overture *Husitská, Op. 67* (1883), and the Czech-born American Karel Husa, in his *Music for Prague 1968*. One of the most touching uses of this theme was made by the late German composer Karl Amadeus Hartmann (1905–1963), who, in a gesture conspicuously courageous in the context of Munich in 1939, took the Hussite hymn as the basis for his *Concerto funèbre* for violin and string orchestra, a work of lamentation for the passing of the Czech Republic.

There is, assuredly, nothing of lamentation in Smetana's use of the theme. Of his *Tábor* he wrote: 'The whole composition is based on this majestic chorale. It was undoubtedly in the town of Tábor, the seat of the Hussites, that this string hymn resounded most powerfully and most frequently. The piece depicts the strong will to win battles, and the dogged perseverance of the Táborites, and it is on this level that the poem ends. It cannot be analysed in detail, because it expresses the glory and renown of the Hussite warriors.' In the manuscript score itself, the composer prefaced the music with the inscription: 'Their character cannot be broken: firm, constant, determined, persevering, unyielding and stubborn.'

According to a 15th-century legend, 'Good King' Wenceslas and his knights did not die, but went to sleep within Mount Blaník (also located in southern Bohemia), there to await a summons to come forth to do great deeds. The legend is not unique to the Czechs: Barbarossa is said to slumber with his knights in the Kyffhäuser in the Harz Mountains (where his red beard has grown through the marble rock), and the Untersberg, near Salzburg, is the legendary resting place of Charles the Great. In Smetana's inspired revision of the Czech legend, it is not Wenceslas and his troops, but the followers of Jan Hus who sleep within the sacred mountain, the defeated veterans of the Battle of the White Mountain (1620) having retired there to await the call to rise up and save their nation in its darkest hour. This is the version now cherished by the Czechs. During World War I, just prior to the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the Czech legions organised in France, Italy, and Russia called themselves Knights of Blaník. The name itself – Blaník – has been a symbol of defiance and affirmation for centuries, but it was Smetana who gave it its deepest meaning.

'*Blaník* begins,' he wrote, 'where the preceding composition ends. Following their eventual defeat, the Hussite heroes took refuge in the Blaník Mountain where, in heavy slumber, they wait for the moment when they will be called to the aid of their country. Hence the chorale, which was used as the basic motif in *Tábor*, is used as the foundation of this piece... It is on the basis of this melody, the Hussite chorale, that the resurrection of the Czech nation, its future happiness and glory, will develop. With this victorious hymn, written in the form of a march, the composition ends, and with it the whole cycle of *Vlast*. As a brief intermezzo we hear a short idyll, a description of the Blaník region where a little shepherd boy plays a pipe while the echo gently floats back to him.'

There are, by actual count, no fewer than five march episodes and three intermezzos in *Blaník*, which opens with a powerful restatement of the concluding phrase of *Tábor*, and proceeds to a grand and jubilant apotheosis. 'Patriotism', one feels, is far too narrow a term to describe either Smetana's motivation or the feeling of exaltation with which this glorious music warms the blood: the vision so triumphantly proclaimed here is no mere parochial gesture, but a reflection of the loftiest aspirations of humanity – set forth in Czech.

Richard Freed

Booklet notes reprinted from the original LP release

St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

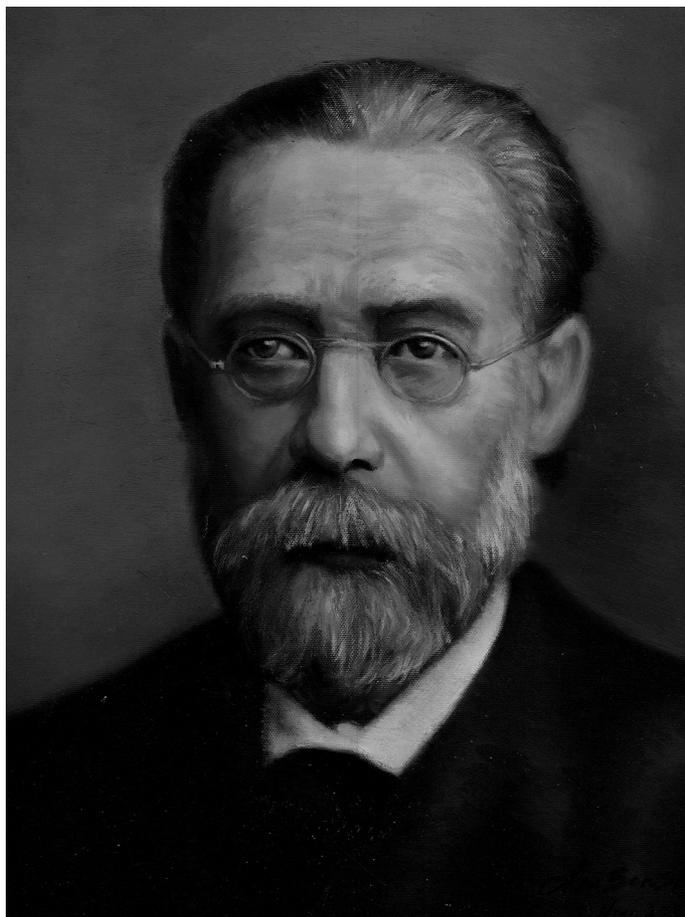
Founded in 1880, the St. Louis Symphony is the second-oldest orchestra in the United States and is widely considered one of the world's finest. In September 2005, internationally acclaimed conductor David Robertson became the twelfth music director and second American-born conductor in the orchestra's history. The St. Louis Symphony is one of only a handful of major American orchestras invited to perform regularly at the prestigious Carnegie Hall. Recordings by the symphony have been honoured with six GRAMMY Awards and 56 GRAMMY nominations over the years. The orchestra has embraced technological advances in music distribution by offering recordings online. The St. Louis Symphony download initiative includes live recordings of John Adams' *Harmonielehre*, Szymanowski's *Violin Concerto No. 1*, with Christian Tetzlaff, and Scriabin's *The Poem of Ecstasy* available exclusively on iTunes and Amazon.com. In 2009, the symphony's Nonesuch recording of John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* and *Guide to Strange Places* reached No. 2 on the *Billboard* rankings for classical music, and was named 'Best CD of the Decade' by the *The Times* of London. In September 2012, the St. Louis Symphony embarked on its first European tour with music director David Robertson. The symphony visited international festivals in Berlin and Lucerne, with stops in Paris and London as well, performing works by Beethoven, Brahms, Sibelius, Schoenberg, Gershwin and Elliott Carter. Christian Tetzlaff joined the symphony as featured soloist. In June 2008, the St. Louis Symphony launched *Building Our Business*, which takes a proactive, two-pronged approach: build audiences and re-invigorate the St. Louis brand making the symphony and Powell Hall *the place to be*; and build the donor base for enhanced institutional commitment and donations. This is all part of a larger strategic plan adopted in May 2009 that includes new core ideology and a ten-year strategic vision focusing on artistic and institutional excellence, doubling the existing audience, and revenue growth across all key operating areas.

Walter Susskind (1913–1980)

Born in 1913 in Prague, Walter Susskind was fortunate to have parents who understood and appreciated the arts and gave him every opportunity to develop his natural talents. At the age of 20 – after extensive training as a pianist, composer, and conductor at the State Conservatory in Prague – he became assistant conductor at the Prague German Opera House. Many of his compositions – song cycles, string quartets, cantatas, operas, transcriptions, film scores, and other works – were introduced in European countries at this time.

In 1945, Susskind made his English debut as a symphony conductor with the Liverpool Philharmonic – followed immediately by engagements with the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, and BBC orchestras. He became guest conductor of the Scottish National Orchestra in 1946 and continued to make guest appearances with other leading European orchestras.

In 1953, Susskind moved to Melbourne, Australia, to become conductor of the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, and in 1956 joined the Toronto Symphony as its conductor and music director. From 1962 until 1968 he was music director and conductor of the Aspen Music Festival. Susskind moved to St. Louis in 1968, where he held the post of music director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra until 1975. Following the death of Thomas Schippers he served as music advisor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra through the 1979–80 seasons.



Portrait of Bedřich Smetana by Chai Ben-Shan

SMETANA

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Amongst a pantheon of great Czech composers it is Bedřich Smetana who is revered as the musical personification of his country's national spirit, and the founder of its modern musical character. Composed after the onset of Smetana's incurable deafness, *Má vlast* (My Fatherland) is an unprecedented cycle of six related symphonic poems that evokes ancient Czech legends and celebrates the majestic beauty of the country's landscapes. Acclaimed with 'unending storms of applause' at its 1882 premiere, *Má vlast* echoes the unique characteristics that form the living heart and soul of the Czech nation.

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**Bedřich
SMETANA**
(1824–1884)

	Má vlast (My Fatherland) (1872–79)	75:57
1	Vyšehrad (The High Castle)	14:30
2	Vltava (Moldau)	12:11
3	Šárka	9:56
4	Z českých luhů a hájů (From Bohemia's Woods and Fields)	12:02
5	Tábor	12:47
6	Blaník	14:32

St. Louis Symphony Orchestra
Walter Susskind

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