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SYMPHONIES 2 & 8



CHIEF CONDUCTOR JAIME MARTÍN



ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

(1841–1904)

Symphony No.2 in B-Flat, Op.4 [58'18]

- I. *Allegro con moto* [16'40]
- II. *Poco adagio* [17'02]
- III. *Scherzo: Allegro con brio* [13'13]
- IV. *Finale: Allegro con fuoco* [11'23]

*Recorded on 31 March - 5 April 2025
at Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall*

Symphony No.8 in G, Op.88 [38'42]

- I. *Allegro con brio* [10'25]
- II. *Adagio* [11'10]
- III. *Allegro grazioso–Molto vivace* [5'58]
- IV. *Allegro ma non troppo* [11'09]

*Recorded on 25-29 June 2024
at Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall*

Total play time: [97'00]



Orchestra photos: Samantha Meuleman





ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Symphony No.2 in B-Flat, Op.4

- I. *Allegro con moto*
- II. *Poco adagio*
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- IV. *Finale: Allegro con fuoco*

Symphony No.8 in G, Op.88

- I. *Allegro con brio*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Allegro grazioso–Molto vivace*
- IV. *Allegro ma non troppo*

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Jaime Martín conductor

In 1865, Antonín Dvořák was the principal violist of the Provisional Theatre Orchestra in Prague while teaching piano and composing prolifically on the side. That year he wrote his first two symphonies with little hope of a performance, and both scores were nearly lost forever: he mailed his only copy of the First to a German competition that never returned it, and then he considered burning the Second as juvenilia, but was thwarted by his roommate, who had loaned the money to bind the score.

Dvořák's life changed in 1875, when he won his first Austrian State Stipendium with the support of Johannes Brahms, and he began to focus on composing. After finishing three more symphonies, he returned to the Second, revising it for a premiere in Prague on March 11, 1888. It would be the only performance during his lifetime, and even today, the Second Symphony is very rarely played.

Despite his later alignment with Brahms, Dvořák had an early interest in the stylistically opposed music of Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. This comes through in the loose association of themes in the outer movements of the Second Symphony, as well as in its painterly sense of scene and occasional moments of storminess and humour. Critics tend to find the Second overstuffed with ideas, but even so, they acknowledge the presence of Dvořák's unique melodic and rhythmic sense. "In this symphony youth finds expression," wrote his first biographer, Otakar Šourek, "but youth which is already conscious of its power and is looking forward with clear and confident eyes to its own future. Thus the musical content of the symphony is, for the most part, of a happy spring-like freshness, full of movement and youthful, buoyant élan."

All four movements begin with brief introductions that become a subtle connecting device across the symphony. With a gentle lead-in, the first movement turns out to be a vigorous *Allegro con moto*, laced with more tranquil and pastoral moments. The *Poco adagio* is most typical of Dvořák as we now know him, presaging slow movements of his later symphonies. Some commentators speculate that it reflects his love for Josefína Čermáková, a piano student who rejected his interest, but later became his sister-in-law. The middle section develops two themes in a delicate fugato.

The *Scherzo* is unusually broad and varied: the trio section gives a lyrical theme to the cellos, while cool-toned chords in the flutes and upper woodwinds serve as a questioning gesture. The *Finale's* introduction is bizarre for 1865—even pointillistic, to use a term that wouldn't be coined for another three decades. But it quickly builds into a more conventional series of tunes, occasionally offset by more oddball ideas, which hurtle together toward a jubilant conclusion.



By 1889, Dvořák was an internationally famous composer, far from his beginnings as a Bohemian butcher's son. In 1884 he toured England for the first time, conducting his own works in major London venues to great acclaim, and then returned to Bohemia with the proceeds—buying an idyllic countryside property in Vysoká, where his sister-in-law and her husband lived. He renovated an old building into a summer residence, complete with an upright piano and a study to compose in. Apart from music, he took great pleasure in gardening and raising pigeons there, alongside his wife and children.

While the breakthrough Sixth Symphony had been intended for the Vienna Philharmonic and the Seventh for London's Royal Philharmonic Society, Dvořák seems to have begun the Eighth Symphony without a specific performance in mind. He began writing it at Vysoká in late August 1889 and completed it that November. He offered to bring it to Moscow as part of a tour organised by Tchaikovsky, but ultimately the premiere was given in Prague on February 2, 1890, with the National Theatre Orchestra. Dvořák dedicated the symphony to the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts, which subsequently inducted him, and in the following years he would conduct the piece widely, including performances in London, Frankfurt, at the University of Cambridge, and at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

The Berlin-based Fritz Simrock had been Dvořák's primary publisher ever since Brahms' recommendation in 1877. Their relationship had become strained, however, after Simrock made a low offer for the Seventh Symphony, and then outright declined to publish the Eighth, asking for shorter chamber works instead. Dvořák, calling on his new English connections, turned to the London firm Novello, which published the Symphony in 1892.

"With this Symphony, [Dvořák] wanted to produce a work that differed from his other symphonies and that elaborated the musical contents in a new way," observed Otakar Šourek. The Symphony's sheer beauty and tunefulness can disguise its inventiveness: themes are rarely more than a few measures long, connecting and developing more through intuition than by formal devices. Brahms thought this was a shortcoming: "There's too much that's fragmentary, incidental, loitering about in the piece. Everything is fine, musically captivating and beautiful—but no main point!"

Dvořák, however, was beginning to see himself more as a musical poet than strictly a composer in the Brahmsian mould. The musicologist Klaus Döge identifies the Eighth Symphony as a turning point in his career, part of a "compositional reorientation" toward more evocative and freely conceived music.

The first movement begins in the key of G minor with a lyrical cello melody that feels slower than the marked tempo of *Allegro con brio*. One might wonder if this is just an introduction or actually the main theme. The distinction breaks down as the flute entrance in some sense seems to be the "real" subject (set in the major home key with a livelier feel), yet the opening melody recurs later, which wouldn't be expected of a simple introduction. Dvořák is creating his own organic form.

The two middle movements carry over subtle links from the first movement. The *Adagio* echoes the first movement's opening—this time beginning with a major key idea in the strings before the flute enters with a pastoral minor response. A middle section paints a countryside scene, no doubt inspired by *Vysoká*, complete with a solo fiddle. The third movement, *Allegretto graziosa*, offers a sinuous waltz contrasted with an earthier folk dance (with a tune derived from Dvořák's 1874 one-act opera *The Stubborn Lovers*).

The finale starts with a fanfare from two trumpets, introducing another cello theme that becomes the subject of evolving variations. At times, Dvořák indulges in silliness with braying trills in the woodwinds and horns before a dramatic climax and energetic collapse.

Šourek thought the Eighth Symphony confirmed “not only Dvořák's vital and artistic maturity, but also his personal and national originality,” surpassing his previous symphonies with “the charm of its suggestive, warmly intimate, and regional individuality.”

—Benjamin Pesetsky © 2025





JAIME MARTÍN

Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and Music Director of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Spanish conductor Jaime Martín has also held the positions of Chief Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland (2019-2024), Principal Guest Conductor of the Spanish National Orchestra (2022-2024) and Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of Gävle Symphony Orchestra (2013-2022). In 2024/25, Martín became Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Having spent many years as a highly regarded flautist, working with the most inspiring conductors of our time, Jaime turned to conducting full-time in 2013 and has become very quickly sought after at the highest level.

Martín regularly conducts major orchestras in the UK, Europe, the US, and Australasia. Recent highlights include a critically acclaimed BBC Proms appearance with BBC NOW and leading an 11-day Beethoven Festival with the Melbourne Symphony, conducting all nine symphonies. In August 2025 Martín also led the Melbourne Symphony on a UK and Europe tour, their first full international tour since 2019, with stops at the Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Proms.

His extensive discography includes recordings with Gävle Symphony, Orquestra de Cadaqués, Barcelona Symphony, London Philharmonic, and recent releases with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's newly launched label; Debussy & Strauss (May 2024) featuring soprano Siobhan Stagg, Dvořák: Symphonies Nos. 5 & 6 (November 2024), marking a new Dvořák cycle and Holst: *The Planets* – Deborah Cheetham Fraillon: *Earth* (May 2025).

Martín is Artistic Advisor and former Artistic Director of the Santander Festival and a Fellow of the Royal College of Music, London, where he was a flute professor. He now enjoys working with many of his former students in orchestras around the world.



MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra is Australia's preeminent orchestra, dedicated to creating meaningful experiences that transcend borders and connect communities. Through the shared language of music, the MSO delivers performances of the highest standard, enriching lives and inspiring audiences across the globe.

Woven into the cultural fabric of Victoria and with a history spanning more than a century, the MSO reaches five million people annually through performances, TV, radio, and online broadcasts, as well as critically acclaimed recordings from its recording label.

Jaime Martín continues to lead the Orchestra as Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor. In 2026 he helms an Artistic Family that includes Principal Guest Conductor Benjamin Northey, Cybec Assistant Conductor Daniel Corvaia, MSO Chorus Director Warren Trevelyan-Jones, Composer in Residence Joe Chindamo, Cybec Young Composer in Residence Andrew Aronowicz, Cybec First Nations Composer in Residence James Henry, Artist in Residence, Learning & Engagement Karen Kyriakou, Young Artist in Association Christian Li, and Artistic Ambassadors Tan Dun, Lu Siqing and Xian Zhang.

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

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mso.com.au

MUSICIANS FEATURED ON THIS RECORDING

* denotes SYMPHONY NO.2 only

^ denotes SYMPHONY NO.8 only

FIRST VIOLINS

Sophie Rowell, *Guest Concertmaster*[^]

Tair Khisambeev, *Acting Associate
Concertmaster*

Anne-Marie Johnson, *Acting Assistant
Concertmaster*

Peter Edwards, *Assistant Principal**

Emily Beauchamp[^]

Juliette Boirayon[^]

Clare Carrick*

Sarah Curro

Jacqueline Edwards[^]

Peter Fellin[^]

Deborah Goodall

Karla Hanna[^]

Lorraine Hook

Kirstin Kenny[^]

Eleanor Mancini*

Mark Mogilevski

Lynette Rayner*

Michelle Ruffolo

Jaso Sasaki*

Anna Skálová

Marie-Louise Slaytor*

Oksana Thompson

SECOND VIOLINS

Matthew Tomkins, *Principal*

Jos Jonker, *Associate Principal*

Monica Curro, *Assistant Principal*

Mary Allison[^]

Isin Cakmakçioglu

Tiffany Cheng*

Jacqueline Edwards*

Freya Franzen

Cong Gu

Andrew Hall

Robert Macindoe*

Donica Tran[^]

Isy Wasserman[^]

Philippa West

Patrick Wong

Roger Young

VIOLAS

Christopher Moore, *Principal*^
Luca Casciato, *Associate Principal**
Lauren Brigden
Katharine Brockman
Anthony Chataway
William Clark^
Karen Columbine
Andrew Crothers^
Ceridwen Davies
Aidan Filshie
Gabrielle Halloran*
Jenny Khafagi
Paul McMillan*
Isabel Morse*
Fiona Sargeant^

CELLOS

David Berlin, *Principal*
Rachael Tobin, *Associate Principal*
Elina Faskhi, *Assistant Principal**
Jonathan Chim*
Rohan de Korte
Joshua Jones*
Alexandra Partridge^
Anna Pokorny^
Rebecca Proietto
Angela Sargeant^
Caleb Wong
Michelle Wood

DOUBLE BASSES

Jonathon Coco, *Principal*
Stephen Newton, *Acting Associate Principal*
Ben Hanlon, *Acting Assistant Principal*
Luca Arcaro
Caitlin Bass
Rohan Dasika^
Kinga Janiszewski*
Suzanne Lee*
Emma Sullivan^

FLUTES

Prudence Davis, *Principal*
Sarah Beggs*
Andrew Macleod, *Principal Piccolo*

OBOES

Johannes Grosso, *Principal**
Michael Pisani, *Acting Principal*^
Ann Blackburn

CLARINETS

Philip Arkinstall, *Associate Principal*
Craig Hill

BASSOONS

Jack Schiller, *Principal*
Brock Imison, *Principal Contrabassoon*

HORNS

Nicolas Fleury, *Principal*
Saul Lewis, *Principal Third*
Abbey Edlin
Aidan Gabriels^
Josiah Kop^
Rachel Shaw*

TRUMPETS

Owen Morris, *Principal*
Koominka*
Rosie Turner

TROMBONES

José Milton Vieira, *Principal**
Don Immel, *Guest Principal^*
Richard Shirley
Mike Szabo, *Principal Bass Trombone*

TUBA

Alex Hurst^

TIMPANI

Matthew Thomas, *Principal*





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For Melbourne Symphony Orchestra: Jayde Walker, Phil Paschke and Samantha Meuleman

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra respectfully acknowledges the people of the Eastern Kulin Nations as the Traditional Custodians of the un-ceded land on which these works were performed. We acknowledge Elders past and present, and honour the world's oldest continuing music practice.

Total playing time 97'00. Recorded live in Hamer Hall, Arts Centre Melbourne, June 2024 and March/April 2025.