



DVOŘÁK

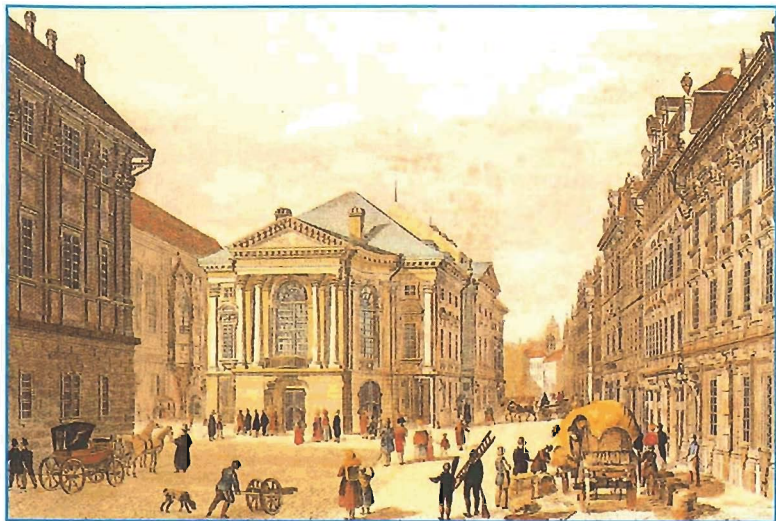
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8.550267

Symphony No. 2

Legends Op. 59, Nos. 6 - 10

Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra
Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra
(Bratislava)
Stephen Gunzenhauser



Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

Symphony No. 2 in B Flat Major

Legends Op. 59, Nos. 6 - 10

Antonín Dvořák was born in 1841, the son of a butcher and innkeeper in the village of Nelahozeves, near Kralupy, in Bohemia, and some forty miles north of Prague. It was natural that he should follow the example of his father and grandfather by learning the family trade, and to this end he left school at the age of eleven. There is no reliable record of his competence in butchery, but his musical abilities were early apparent, and in 1853 he was sent to lodge with an uncle in Zlonice, where he continued an apprenticeship started at home, learning German and improving his knowledge of music, rudimentary skill in which he had already acquired at home and in the village band and church. Further study of German and of music at Kamenice, a town in northern Bohemia, led to his admission, in 1857, to the Prague Organ School, from which he graduated two years later.

In the years that followed, Dvořák earned his living as a viola-player in a band under the direction of Karel Komzák which was to form the nucleus of the Provisional Theatre Orchestra, established in 1862. Four years later Smetana was appointed conductor of the opera-house, where his Czech operas *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia* and *The Bartered Bride* had already been performed. It was not until 1871 that Dvořák resigned from the theatre orchestra, to devote more time to composition, as his music began to draw some favourable local attention. Two years later he married and early in 1874 became organist of the church of St. Adalbert. During this period he continued to support himself by private teaching, while busy on a series of compositions that gradually became known to a wider circle.

Further recognition came in 1875 with the award of a Ministry of Education stipendium by a committee in Vienna that included the critic Eduard Hanslick and Brahms. The following year Dvořák failed to win the award, but was

successful in 1877. His fourth application brought the personal interest of Hanslick and Brahms and a connection with Simrock, the latter's publisher, who expressed a wish to publish the Moravian Duets and commissioned a set of Slavonic Dances for piano duet. These compositions won particular popularity. There were visits to Germany and to England, where he was always received with greater enthusiasm than a Czech composer would ever at that time have won in Vienna. The series of compositions that followed secured him an unassailable position in Czech music and a place of honour in the larger world.

Early in 1891 Dvořák became professor of composition at Prague Conservatory. In the summer of the same year he was invited to become director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, a venture which, it was hoped, would lay the foundations for American national music. The very Bohemian musical results of Dvořák's time in America are well known. Here he wrote his Ninth Symphony, *From the New World*, its themes influenced, at least, by what he had heard of indigenous American Indian and Negro music, his American Quartet and a charming sonatina for violin and piano. In 1895 he returned home to his work at the Prague Conservatory, writing in the following year a series of symphonic poems and before the end of the century two more operas, to add to the nine he had already composed. He died in Prague in 1904.

Dvořák's nine symphonies span a period of nearly thirty years. The first two were written in 1865, and the last in 1893. Both the numbering of the symphonies and the opus numbers assigned to them have caused some confusion. The first four symphonies were originally omitted from the list, so that the last five were numbered, although not in order of composition, the basis of the more usual numbering today. Opus numbers were also manipulated to some extent, a simple subterfuge to outwit Simrock by allocating earlier opus numbers to new compositions, on which he would otherwise have had an option.

Dvořák's Second Symphony, in B flat major, was written in the autumn of

1865, separated from the earlier symphony by the composition of the song-cycle *Cypresses*. It is scored for the same forces as its predecessor and is again in the usual four movements. The circumstances of composition were, as before, straitened. Dvořák was first viola in the Theatre Orchestra, leading a section of two players. His meagre income allowed him enough to share a room with a group of colleagues and friends, one of whom had a piano, an instrument he had been too poor to afford himself. The symphony was performed once in the composer's life-time, in 1888, in a revised version.

While some have seen a connection between Dvořák's C minor Symphony and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, in the same key, others have detected a resemblance between the B flat major Symphony and Beethoven's Pastoral, if only one of mood. At the same time it is possible to detect an overt Wagnerian aspect to the work, in its harmonies and in its treatment of climaxes. The first movement is rich in melodic invention and displays the composer's command of the orchestra and Bohemian use of the wind instruments, which often assume prominence.

The slow movement is in G minor, gently evocative, the first of its three sections dominated by a gradually unwinding violin melody. There is an unexpected contrapuntal interruption of the lyrical flow of the music and a dramatic climax, as the trumpets introduce the return of the first section with a fanfare. The relative stillness of night is to be disturbed again before all is finished. This, the longest movement of the symphony, is followed by the scherzo, the introduction to which provides a slow transition to a principal melody of particular charm and music of marked contrast, before there is a shift to A major for the trio section of the movement. The sound of the scherzo melts away and the violas, in the least flattering part of their register, are entrusted with the sinister opening of the finale, which proceeds at once to something more cheerful, although the movement is not without darker touches.

Dvořák started work on the *Legends* on 30th December 1880 and completed the set of ten pieces for piano duet on 22nd March in the following year. In

November he set to work to orchestrate the Legends, at the request of the publisher Simrock, as he had the first set of Slavonic Dances written three years before. The Legends were dedicated to the critic Eduard Hanslick, and he and Brahms welcomed the pieces with some enthusiasm, as did the public. There was always a significant domestic market for piano duets, explored by Brahms in his Hungarian Dances and by Dvořák first in his Slavonic Dances. The period of composition of the Legends closely followed the completion of the Sixth Symphony and was immediately followed by work on the opera Dimitrij, and may in this sense, be seen as a momentary relaxation from the demands of the larger public forms.

The Legends have no overt programme. Lyrical in mood and relatively short, the ten pieces are evocatively Bohemian in character, imbued with the spirit of Dvořák's native country. The sixth introduces an element of romantic drama, gently relaxed in the central section and final bars. The seventh, an Allegretto grazioso in A major, has an element of caprice in its opening rhythm, moving to a livelier middle section. There follows a pastoral F major Legend, the opening bars of which, at least, recall a Chopin Ballade, as some critics have noted. The ninth employs a Bohemian dance form and the series ends with a gently idyllic B flat major Andante, momentarily increasing in tension, before an evocative horn solo, which for the moment restores something of the original mood, and the wistful conclusion.

Stephen Gunzenhauser

Stephen Gunzenhauser, a graduate of Oberlin College and the New England Conservatory, served Igor Markevich and Leopold Stokowski as assistant conductor before becoming executive and artistic director of the Wilmington Music School in 1974. In 1979, he became conductor and music director of the Delaware Symphony Orchestra. He records exclusively for Naxos and Marco Polo and his recordings include works of Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Vivaldi, Mozart, Glière, and Liadov. In 1989/90 he recorded all nine Dvořák symphonies with the Slovak Philharmonic, as well as the three Borodin symphonies with the Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

Sinfonie Nr. 2 B-dur, Op. 4

Legenden Op. 59, Nr. 6 - 10

Antonin Dvořák wurde 1841 in einem böhmischen Dorf etwa 70 km nördlich von Prag geboren. Obwohl seine Musikalität früh auffiel, stand fest, daß er den Beruf seines Vaters und Großvaters erlernen und Schlachter werden sollte. Während seiner Lehrzeit lernte er Deutsch und bildete sich musikalisch weiter, sodaß er 1857 in die Prager Orgelschule aufgenommen werden konnte. Nach Abschluß der zweijährigen Ausbildung nahm er eine Stelle als Bratschist in dem Theaterorchester an, dessen Leitung Friedrich Smetana 1866 übernahm. 1871 gab Dvořák diese Tätigkeit wieder auf, um sich mehr dem Komponieren widmen zu können. 1874 übernahm er eine Organistenstelle, außerdem gab er noch privat Unterricht. Inzwischen hatten seine Kompositionen soweit Beachtung gefunden, daß er 1875 ein Stipendium des Erziehungsministeriums gewann. Dem Komitee in Wien, das die Preisträger auswählte, gehörten u.a. Brahms und der Kritiker Eduard Hanslick an. Nach einem weiteren Stipendium 1877 wurden Brahms und Hanslick näher auf ihn aufmerksam, ebenso der Verleger Simrock, der mit der Veröffentlichung der Mährischen Duette und einiger Slawischer Tänze für Klavier zur wachsenden Popularität Dvořáks beitrug. Reisen nach Deutschland und England festigten seinen Ruf als tschechischer Komponist, und im Jahre 1891 wurde Dvořák als Professor für Komposition an das Prager Konservatorium berufen. Noch im gleichen Jahr folgte er einem Ruf als Direktor des National Conservatory of Music nach New York. Dort hoffte man, mit Dvořáks Hilfe eine amerikanische Nationalmusik ins Leben rufen zu können. Aus der Zeit in Amerika stammen einige seiner populärsten Werke, wie das "amerikanische" Streichquartett in F- dur und die Sinfonie "Aus der Neuen Welt". 1895 kehrte Dvořák nach Prag zurück, wo er nach schaffensreichen Jahren 1904 starb.

Dvořáks 9 Sinfonien entstanden in den drei Jahrzehnten von 1863 bis 1893. Was die Numerierung und die Opus-Zahlen betrifft, gibt es einige Verwirrung,

da Dvořák die ersten vier Sinfonien ursprünglich nicht auf seiner eigenen Liste verzeichnet hatte und die Nummern der übrigen fünf, entgegen der heutigen Praxis, nicht der Reihenfolge ihrer Entstehung entsprachen.

Dvořák schrieb die 2. Sinfonie B-dur im Herbst 1865, zu einer Zeit, als er als Stimmführer der kleinen Bratschengruppe im Theaterorchester nur ein kümmerliches Einkommen hatte und ein Zimmer mit Kollegen teilen mußte, wodurch er allerdings Zugang zu einem Klavier hatte, das er sich allein nicht hätte leisten können. Die Sinfonie ist zu Dvoraks Lebzeiten nur einmal erklingen.

Dvořák schrieb die 10 Legenden für Klavier zu vier Händen Anfang 1880. Auf Wunsch des Verlegers Simrock stellte er noch im selben Jahr eine Orchesterfassung her. Die Stücke wurden von dem Kritiker Eduard Hanslick, dem sie gewidmet waren, ebenso wie von Brahms und der musikalischen Öffentlichkeit mit Begeisterung aufgenommen. Klavierduos waren damals Mode - schon Brahms mit den Ungarischen Tänzen und Dvořák mit seinen Slawischen Tänzen waren darauf eingegangen. Für den Komponisten muß die Komposition dieser kleinen Formen zwischen der gerade fertiggestellten 6. Sinfonie und der Arbeit an der Oper Dimitri ein Akt der Entspannung gewesen sein.

Für die Legenden gibt es kein Programm. Den kurzen lyrischen Stücken eigen ist der böhmische Charakter, Ausdruck des Heimatgefühls des Komponisten. Die sechste Legende wirkt eher dramatisch, während die siebte, ein Allegretto grazioso in A-dur, ein wenig den Charakter eines Capriccio hat. Das achte Stück in F-dur wirkt pastoral und erinnert in seinen ersten Takten an eine Ballade von Chopin. Das neunte Stück ist ein böhmischer Tanz. Das letzte Stück ist ein zartes idyllisches Andante in B-dur, dessen Spannung steigt, bis ein Hornsolo wieder zur Anfangsstimmung zurückführt.

DVORÁK on / auf NAXOS CD'S

Polonaise / Scherzo Capriccioso / Slavonic Rhapsody (+ SMETANA)	8.550376
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Symphonies Nos. 5 & 7	8.550270
Symphony No. 9 "New World" / Symphonic Variations	8.550271



8.550267

STEREO

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Playing
Time :
73'06"

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Symphony No. 2
Legends Op. 59, Nos. 6 - 10

Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra
Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra
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Symphony No. 2 in B Major, Op. 4

- | | | |
|----------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Allegro con moto | (15:51) |
| 2 | Poco adagio | (14:53) |
| 3 | Scherzo: Allegro con brio | (11:55) |
| 4 | Finale: Allegro con fuoco | (10:53) |

Legends Op. 59, Nos. 6 - 10

- | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 5 | Allegro con moto | (5:13) |
| 6 | Allegretto grazioso | (2:46) |
| 7 | Un poco allegretto e grazioso | (4:00) |
| 8 | Andante con moto | (2:37) |
| 9 | Andante | (4:18) |

Recorded at the Reduta Concert Hall in Bratislava in
May, 1990 (Nos. 1 - 4) and at Concert Hall of
Czechoslovak Radio in Bratislava in May, 1991
(Nos. 5 - 9).

Producers: Martin Sauer; Günter Appenheimer
Music Notes: Keith Anderson

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