

London Philharmonic Orchestra

DVOŘÁK
SYMPHONY NO. 7

SCHUMANN
SYMPHONY NO. 2

EDWARD GARDNER conductor
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



CONTENTS

CLICK THE LINKS TO NAVIGATE

[PROGRAMME NOTES:](#)

[DVOŘÁK: SYMPHONY NO. 7](#) 3

[SCHUMANN SYMPHONY NO. 2](#) 4

[EDWARD GARDNER](#) 6

[LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA](#) 7

[CREDITS](#) 8

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN D MINOR, OP. 70

- 1 Allegro maestoso
- 2 Poco adagio
- 3 Scherzo: Vivace – Poco meno mosso
- 4 Finale: Allegro

The Seventh might not be Dvořák's most popular symphony, but it's arguably his best. In the composer's own mind, he simply had to deliver something special for the London Philharmonic Society, who had commissioned the piece in 1884. His career was at a crossroads: success had finally come, offers were being made, and contacts were putting themselves forward. Brahms and others were urging Dvořák to consider a move from his hometown of Prague to Vienna or Berlin. All Dvořák had to do – in his own mind – was prove that he could write first-class symphonic music already; music that didn't rely overtly on indigenous Czech folk themes and that demonstrated a firm grasp of symphonic thought.

On that front, Dvořák more than succeeded with his Seventh Symphony. It was first performed on 22 April 1885 in St James's Hall, London, and was immediately hailed as a masterpiece. As a symphony it's near flawless, and certainly Dvořák's most organic and well-argued. For that, the composer had Brahms to thank. Dvořák had recently heard Brahms's Third Symphony, whose taut,

concise and clear-cut structure is wholly evident here. There are also a good few points of direct comparison: both symphonies contain radiant horn solos (you'll hear Dvořák's in his second movement) and both are stalked by a sense of underlying darkness.

That darkness – perhaps 'severity' is a better word – had been uncommon in Dvořák's music up to this point. The Seventh was the composer's first symphony written in a minor key and it only rarely finds the major. Even so, the joy and bustle associated with Dvořák's music is somehow ever-present – either fighting to be heard or peering through the composer's minor-key colourings. Perhaps it's the composer's profusion of rich melodies that keeps the Symphony so consistently radiant even when resolutely rooted in the minor (as in the demonic dance of the *Scherzo*, for example).

So organic and rich in cross-referencing is the Seventh's music that an analysis of its themes and their origins is best left for academics. What's worth listening out for in the first movement, however, is the restlessness of Dvořák's lower strings, which helps create a feeling of impending stormy weather; throughout, instruments enter in a fragmentary fashion, each seeming to stride into the conversation with a conflicting view.

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–56)

SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN C MAJOR, OP. 61

Dvořák's second movement is a continuous, river-like flow of inspired melodies opening with what sounds like an ancient chorale in a serene F major, the key that also closes the movement. The aforementioned horn solo that comes later represents one of the Symphony's only moments of warmth; a sudden appearance of the sun between clouds. Though the third movement features an idyllic Trio section, it's surrounded by a demonic dance built from an insistent, syncopated figure that combines duple and triple time in reference to the furiant, a Czech folk dance.

Dvořák didn't want to over-egg his use of devices and themes from Czech folk music in the Symphony, and uses them similarly fleetingly and subtly in his finale. This movement is a fierce tussle, relieved only by its bright secondary idea cast in a major key and first heard on cellos, supported by lightly ornamenting violins. Dvořák seems to triumph over the movement's nervous energy as he introduces a theme of distinctly Czech character on the flutes. In a dramatic coda, the Symphony's final paragraph, the music finally finds victory as it discovers the warmth of D major.

Programme note © Andrew Mellor

- 1 Sostenuto assai – Allegro ma non troppo
- 2 Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- 3 Adagio espressivo
- 4 Allegro molto vivace

Of Schumann's four symphonies, the Second is the one that has polarised opinion the most. For the eminent 19th-century musicologist Philipp Spitta, it had a 'graver and more mature depth of feeling; its bold decisiveness of form and overpowering wealth of expression reveal distinctively the relationship in art between Schumann and Beethoven.' But for the British critic Mosco Carner, the Symphony was a 'pathetic failure ... Laborious, dull, often mediocre in thematic invention, plodding and repetitive in argument' – a direct consequence, Carner suggested, of Schumann's 'mental state' at the time he wrote it. How can a piece of music provoke such extreme reactions? Schumann himself provided a clue:

'I wrote my symphony in December 1845, and I sometimes fear my semi-invalid state can be divined from the music. I began to feel more myself when I wrote the last movement, and I was certainly much better when I finished the whole work. All the same it reminds me of dark days.'

'Semi-invalid' is an understatement. In 1844, after four years of volcanic creativity, Schumann fell into terrible, paralysing depression. For about a year he wrote virtually nothing. But in May–July 1845 he was at last able to force himself back to work, first completing his Piano Concerto, then beginning work on the Second Symphony. Mosco Carner's intensely negative response to it may be more understandable as a reaction to its emotional character, especially to the first movement. At first everything seems hopeful enough: a hushed brass fanfare confidently rises above an evenly flowing theme on low strings. But the fast main movement is dominated by an obsessively repetitive theme. For some, clearly, this obsessiveness is too much, but in the right interpretative hands its dogged determination can be enormously compelling, drawing the listener directly into Schumann's own struggles to work himself free from the coils of crippling depression.

The first movement ends with hope renewed, the opening quiet brass fanfare now sounding out thrillingly in the trumpets. But there is something restless and edgy about the energy of the following *Scherzo* that the two gentler Trio sections do little to pacify. It is in the great *Adagio espressivo* that Schumann finally confronts melancholy and desolation head on. The opening motif (violins) recalls Bach, who in his two great *Passions* transformed the darkest emotions into glorious, noble lyricism. Schumann later admitted that composing this music was not all pain: the 'mournful bassoon' solo at the heart of the movement, he said, gave him 'peculiar pleasure'.

The finale is in fact one of Schumann's most original symphonic arguments. A rousing first theme is followed by a more lyrical second, itself a transformation of the slow movement's Bachian main motif. Both themes are developed and recapitulated – all very proper and classical, if a bit on the brief side. But then comes something very unusual: a plaintive inversion of the *Adagio* theme brings the music back to the slow movement's sombre minor key, the energy flags, and the music comes to a halt – almost as though this were an alternative, tragic ending for the *Adagio*.

What happens next is that Schumann draws breath and simply starts again. First we hear a new theme in woodwind harmonies. This is a near-quotation from Beethoven's song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* ('To the distant beloved'), which Schumann had alluded to in several works during his agonisingly protracted courtship of his wife Clara. The words of the song Schumann invokes here are, in English, 'Take, O take these songs I offer' – surely an offering of thanks to Clara for her help in getting him through the crisis of 1844–5. After this comes a long but compelling *crescendo* of affirmation, culminating in a wordless hymn of love for full orchestra.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

EDWARD GARDNER CONDUCTOR



© Benjamin Ealovega

Edward Gardner has been Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra since 2021, recently extending his contract until at least 2028. He is also Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet, and Honorary Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, following his tenure as Chief Conductor from 2015–24.

This is Edward Gardner's fifth release on the LPO Label: previous recordings include Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*, captured live at his first concert as Principal Conductor, which won a 2023 Gramophone Award; Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*; a second Tippett disc featuring the Piano Concerto and Symphony No. 2; and Rachmaninov's *The Bells* and *Symphonic Dances*.

In demand as a guest conductor, Edward has appeared with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and Vienna Symphony. He also continues

his longstanding collaborations with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, where he was Principal Guest Conductor from 2010–16, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Music Director of English National Opera from 2006–15, Edward has an ongoing relationship with New York's Metropolitan Opera, where he has conducted *The Damnation of Faust*, *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Werther*. He made his debut at London's Royal Opera House in 2019 in *Káťa Kabanová*, returning for *Werther* the following season and the world premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Festen* in 2025. He has also conducted at the Bavarian State Opera, La Scala, Chicago Lyric Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opéra National de Paris and Teatro di San Carlo.

Born in Gloucester in 1974, Edward was educated at the University of Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music. He went on to become Assistant Conductor of the Hallé and Music Director of Glyndebourne Touring Opera. His many accolades include Royal Philharmonic Society Award Conductor of the Year (2008), an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera (2009) and an OBE for services to music in The Queen's Birthday Honours (2012).

Edward Gardner's position at the LPO is generously supported by Aud Jebsen.

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the world's finest orchestras, balancing a long and distinguished history with its present-day position as one of the most dynamic and forward-looking ensembles in the UK. This reputation has been secured by the Orchestra's performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, trailblazing international tours and wide-ranging educational work.

Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1932, the Orchestra has since been headed by many of the world's greatest conductors, including Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In September 2021 Edward Gardner became the Orchestra's Principal Conductor, succeeding Vladimir Jurowski, who became Conductor Emeritus in recognition of his transformative impact on the Orchestra as Principal Conductor from 2007–21.

The Orchestra is based at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in London, where it has been Resident Orchestra since 1992. Each summer it takes up its annual residency at Glyndebourne Festival Opera where it has been Resident Symphony Orchestra for 60 years. The Orchestra performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous international tours, performing to sell-out audiences in America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including those with LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti, Tennstedt and Masur, to Jurowski and Gardner.

lpo.org.uk



ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

36:43 **Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70**

- 01 10:44** Allegro maestoso
- 02 09:30** Poco adagio
- 03 07:16** Scherzo: Vivace – Poco meno mosso
- 04 09:13** Finale: Allegro

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–56)

35:37 **Symphony No. 2 in C major, Op. 61**

- 05 11:42** Sostenuto assai – Allegro ma non troppo
- 06 06:41** Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- 07 09:02** Adagio espressivo
- 08 08:12** Allegro molto vivace

Edward Gardner conductor
London Philharmonic Orchestra
Pieter Schoeman leader

Recorded at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall: Dvořák Symphony No. 7 on 28 September 2022; Schumann Symphony No. 2 on 3 February 2024.

Producers: Nick Parker, Floating Earth (Dvořák); Andrew Walton, K&A Productions (Schumann)

Engineers: Mike Hatch, Floating Earth (Dvořák); Deborah Spanton, K&A Productions (Schumann)

Executive Producers:

Elena Dubinets, David Burke, Graham Wood

© 2025 London Philharmonic Orchestra Ltd

© 2025 London Philharmonic Orchestra Ltd

LPO-0133

lpo.org.uk

