Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Symphonies

It was during the four years in which he lived in the village of Zlonice that Dvořák, following his father's example, served his apprenticeship and was given the necessary certificate qualifying him to trade as a butcher. Meanwhile, in his spare time, he was given a sound basic musical education by the village organist, and when he left Zlonice in 1857 at the age of sixteen, it was to study at the Prague Organ school with his father's reluctant consent.

Although gifted, the young student was not considered to be outstanding by his new teachers, who admired his practical ability more than his skill in theory. By the time he left the organ school in 1859 (because he could no longer afford to stay) Dvořák was sufficiently qualified to become an organist and choirmaster, proficient in both the violin and the viola, and with no doubts that he wanted to be a composer.

In order to earn his living Dvořák joined a popular Prague orchestra as a violist and gave lessons to augment his meagre pay. He lived in Prague with his aunt and uncle almost continuously for sixteen years, from the time he left Zlonice until he married. During this period he played his viola and taught for a living, earning little, composing much, and studying scores. A great deal of what he wrote he later destroyed; and although some of his chamber works were played privately among friends, Dvořák remained unknown and unrecognised for a remarkable time.

Symphony No. 1 in C minor 'Zlonicke zvony' (The Bells of Zlonice)

1. Allegro
2. Adagio molto
3. Allegretto
4. Finale: Allegro animato

In 1864, to everyone's surprise, he was turned down for the third and last time for military service. In the spring of the following year, at the age of twenty-three, he wrote his first symphony. It seems probable that Dvořák submitted the score for some competition in Germany, but there is no doubt that he never saw it again, and less than twenty years later he included the work in a list of early compositions which he claimed to have destroyed.

In this instance Dvořák was mistaken, for the score survived through a strange and fortunate coincidence of names. Browsing through a second-hand bookseller's wares in Leipzig in 1882 – the self-same year that Dvořák began to compose his list of destroyed works – a Dr. Rudolf Dvořák discovered and bought it, as presumably anyone would who stumbled upon the manuscript of a symphony by an unknown and unrelated namesake. Its authenticity is proved by the fact that it is clearly in Dvořák's hand, and several of its themes make further appearances in his later works, especially in the *Silhouettes* op. 8 for piano.

Rudolf Dvořák was a young Czech oriental scholar of twenty-two when he bought the work, and it remained in his possession until he died in 1920, when it passed to his son. Three years later its existence was made public amid great excitement, but it waited until 1936 for its first performance, and even then in a heavily edited form. It has also been recorded, with substantial cuts in the last movement, but it seems likely that the present recording represents the first occasion on which it has been performed complete and uncut.

The score itself was first published in 1961, nearly a hundred years after it was written, and is of unique interest. It is the only one of his symphonies which Dvořák never heard performed and had no chance to revise at a later date. Since much is known of the numerous alterations he made after performance to all his later symphonies, it is certain that he would also have made similar adjustments to 'The Bells of Zlonice' and because his method of revision invariably included making various cuts, it might at first sight seem reasonable to prune this score too.

The objection to such surgery, however, is that it would be not so much presumptuous as misleading, for Dvořák's method of tightening up the structure of his symphonies after a hearing lay as much in enriching his scores with countersubjects and related allusions as in reducing their length, and this is obviously too personal a task to be undertaken by anyone but the composer.

It is for this reason that the present recording attempts to present the work as Dvořák left it, and some of the results are both startling and fascinating. That even at this tender stage of his musical development he knew and understood the essentials of symphonic form and material is immediately apparent. That he was soon to learn a great deal more in relation to their treatment is equally natural, but this symphony as it stands is of especial interest because it shows such positive promise, while at the same time providing an exceptional, if unfair, chance to eavesdrop on the young Dvořák's methods and achievements before his growing fame and the influence of contemporary composers had made much progress in tempering the originality of his talent.

The title 'The Bells of Zlonice' does not appear in the manuscript and has not been fully explained, although it is reputed to have been used by Dvořák in later years when he referred to the work. Allusions to the bells abound in the first movement, and occur to a lesser extent in the finale; but the music itself suggests that his life in Zlonice was a time of seething inner emotions and indicates a restlessness which was nevertheless sure that it would triumph in the end.

What is particularly remarkable is that music of such powerful feeling should have emerged from the inauspicious circumstances in which Dvořák had lived so far. It reveals him setting out on paths which could have led to the most revolutionary character. Certainly it was not lacking in boldness of expression, but the story of his later development is a tribute to the power both of self-criticism and of outside influences, for the gulf which separates his first from his last symphony is far greater than the twenty-eight years which passed between them. It is hard to believe that they were in fact written by the same composer.

Nevertheless it could be argued that circumstances led Dvořák to choose the easier path. The inner struggle of this youthful work promises quite a different development from the one he chose in his later symphonies. Perhaps if he had had the opportunity to hear and revise it in what was to become his customary way, he would have modified its rude energy to suit the tastes of the time.

'The Bells of Zlonice' was conceived as a three-movement work. The first two movements and the finale were completed before Dvořák had the happy idea of adding the charming third movement. This delightful addition (which is not called a scherzo, despite its eminent suitability for the title) forms the ideal bridge between the earnestness of the first two movements and the triumphant vigour of the last.

The first movement is sombre in character and the longest of all Dvořák's symphonic movements. It is nevertheless excellently constructed, while the slow movement has a mellow quality which reveals the ardour of the young composer's feeling as well as the melodic inspiration which was later to develop a more compact form.

The third movement is an altogether engaging addition, which grows quickly and confidently from its reticent beginning. The abruptness and boldness of several of the modulations to some extent prepare the way for passages of violent dissonance in the finale. Indeed, just before the recapitulation in this fourth movement, the degree of dissonance is almost half a century ahead of its time, but all is resolved in a blaze of glory, to conclude this most revealing mirror of Dvořák's earliest symphonic potentialities.

Symphony No. 2 in B flat major, op. 4

1. Allegro con moto
2. Poco adagio
3. Scherzo: Allegro con brio
4. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Dvořák's second symphony was completed shortly after his twenty-fourth birthday, towards the end of 1865. This had already been a most fruitful year, beginning with his first symphony (which he had written during the Spring) followed by his A major Cello Concerto and the major part of an extended song-cycle called *Cypresses*.

One cannot help admiring Dvořák's courage (or wondering at his foolhardiness) in embarking on large-scale orchestral works so early in his otherwise unprecocious career. He had no hope of their being performed, for Prague at the time had far too limited a concert programme to find room for major unknown works, especially by a composer who had only a few years previously graduated from his musical studies without notable distinction.

The particular incentive for so much creative work seems to have been his intense affection for one of his piano pupils – Josefina Cermáková – who remained quite unmoved by his advances. Eventually Dvořák was to marry her sister Anna, but only after a persistent and unsuccessful courtship of his pupil.

In 1863 (two years before Dvořák wrote his first two symphonies) Wagner had visited Prague and made a very deep impression on the young composer, who played in the orchestra under his direction and was already an ardent admirer of Wagner's work. Far from being a mere passing phase, the German composer's influence is still clearly evident not only in these early symphonies but even in the fourth symphony, which was written ten years later.

Nevertheless, as a composer Dvořák remained in almost total obscurity until 1871, writing prolifically and self-critically, mastering as many forms as he could. Most of these experiments were destroyed, and indeed in later years he believed that he had burnt the score of his first symphony, but his second (which he consequently called his first) was clearly a work dear to his heart and one which he always secretly hoped to perform and publish.

In fact the only occasion during his lifetime on which it was performed was in 1888 – some twenty-three years after it was written. He also submitted the work (along with his 3rd, 4th and 5th symphonies) to Simrock in 1887 for publication, having revised it carefully. However, despite his ever-increasing success, he was unable to tempt the publisher to accept more than the fifth symphony alone. As a result, the second was not published until 1959 – nearly a hundred years after it was written.

In the process of revision, the outer movements in particular were substantially shortened and improved. The extent of this process of abbreviation can be gauged from the size of the manuscript score, which was reduced from nearly 260 to 212 pages. He made other alterations for the

performance, but these were mainly confined to adjustments which resulted from hearing the work in rehearsal, and included several very small optional cuts.

After the turbulence of the first symphony, the lyrical affection of the second comes as something of a surprise, if we consider how soon it succeeded its remarkable predecessor. It is (like the fifth symphony) essentially a happy work – no less vigorous than the first but infinitely more ingratiating in mood and assured in execution. It is in this symphony that Dvořák asserts his unmistakable individuality sufficiently strongly to dominate convincingly the many influences he had absorbed.

The work opens with a generous introduction, which propels the music rapidly into the tender first subject. This is a long theme which is shortly repeated a sixth higher, and contains allusions to the skipping triplet rhythm which is to play an important part in the whole movement. A second motif (from the clarinets in the dominant) emphasises this feature, quickly followed by a more artless tune in the home key, before the exposition ends with solo viola allusions to the triplet rhythm.

The exposition gives Dvořák ample scope to explore the possibilities of his material and confirms his already formidable ability to treat it symphonically. A full-scale recapitulation leads with Brahmsian grace into the coda, which, after musing briefly on the movement's more lyrical features, brings it decisively to a close.

All four movements have an introduction. That to the slow movement lasts for eight bars before the violins play the principal theme. This is a beautiful and extended melody in G minor, whose calm serenity contrasts with the extrovert playfulness for the clarinet in the relative major. The whole movement is imbued with a romantic warmth of feeling, with some particularly felicitous touches in the orchestration before it resolves contentedly into G major in the concluding bars.

The scherzo is further confirmation of Dvořák's instinctive ability to handle this type of movement. Although this particular example is nearly twice as long as all his other symphonic scherzos, the interest never begins to flag, and an abundance of vintage-type Dvořák themes ensures its success.

Perhaps the finale can be said to suffer under a weight of too many good tunes, but most of them have a magnificent broad sweep which is exhilarating, if extravagant. Both the scoring and some of the melodies frequently remind one of Tchaikovsky, who visited Prague and met Dvořák for the first time in February 1888 – less than a month before the only performance of this symphony to take place during Dvořák's lifetime.

If any conclusion can be inferred from this coincidence, it can only be that the Russian composer saw the score, and was at least subconsciously impressed by parts of the finale, but a simple analysis of dates and compositions refutes any suggestion that Dvořák could here have drawn inspiration from the works of his Russian friend, who was only graduating from the Moscow Conservatory in the year that the symphony was composed.

Dvořák never fails to conjure up a triumphant and satisfying conclusion to his symphonic works, and the lesson of his first two symphonies is that he later learnt to be jubilant more concisely. It calls for very little indulgence to discover in this youthful symphony a work of outstanding achievement in the circumstances in which it was written, in no way deficient in the beauties which Dvořák's maturer works lead his listeners to expect.

Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, op. 10

1. Allegro moderato
2. Adagio molto
3. Finale: Allegro vivace

In 1859, at the age of 18, Dvořák was obliged to leave the Prague Organ School and earn his living, since the kindly allowance from his family, on which he depended to support himself during his studies, was finally discontinued in the face of bankruptcy. By now he was however trained as a choirmaster and organist, and in addition was a good violin and viola player.

He promptly found congenial if underpaid employment in Karel Komzák's orchestra – a small but popular Prague band which was three years later to become the core of the Czech Interim Theatre Orchestra – and since this enabled him to earn at least a meagre living by playing his favourite instrument – the viola – it was fourteen years before the spur of marriage made him seek a more remunerative post. His third symphony was the last before he left the Interim Orchestra in 1873.

This experience as an orchestral player was naturally of enormous practical value to his composition, for although in the early days, before it moved to the Theatre, the orchestra played the sort of music which restaurateurs find their patrons want the world over, the formation of the Theatre orchestra itself was part of a conscious and vigorous move to create a true Czech school of music.

Amid the political upheavals of the day (for by now Czechoslovakia was seriously trying to break the three-centuries-old grip of the Habsburgs) such an aim inevitably attracted more than a purely musical support from the public, but the governing establishment was well represented at the Prague Provincial German Theatre with which the new provisional opera house had to compete. Dvořák was also an insatiable patron of the German Theatre whenever he could afford to pay, and when he could not, a friendly contact in the orchestra could usually secure for him a concealed viewpoint from the pit.

It was at the German Theatre that his passion for Wagner's works was especially kindled, but it was primarily on Beethoven that the young composer consciously centred his studies, and in a composer whose work was so strongly affected by what he heard or read in a score, it is not surprising that several points in his early works are often momentarily reminiscent of earlier composers.

The third symphony has several unusual features. The absence of a scherzo makes it the only three-movement symphony Dvořák wrote, and is a strange omission when we consider how early he proved himself a master of this type of movement. The deliberate absence of any repeat of the exposition in the first movement finds a parallel in the eighth symphony, but nowhere else, while the slow movement both in length and in intensity of emotion, is quite exceptional for Dvořák.

The work is believed to have been sketched in 1872 and orchestrated in the following year. Its first performance on 29 March 1874 was conducted by Smetana, and was also the first occasion on which Dvořák ever heard one of his symphonies performed in concert. As a result of what he heard, he made extensive alterations soon afterwards, and indeed the second movement seems to have been completely recast.

In its revised form the work was submitted, along with several others, in his successful application for an Austrian State grant in the following year. It was subjected to other, less radical revisions between 1887 and 1889, before he offered it to Simrock, but the publisher did not in fact print it until 1912, eight years alter the composer died.

The first movement combines vigour with tenderness in the most striking manner, and is notable for its economy of material. Alter a very brief introduction, the warm and gracelully-shaped main theme is gradually expanded in the face of punctuating orchestral chords, and quite extensively developed before the arrival of the second subject, in G flat. The serenity of this theme is ruffled from time to time by string figures and allusions to the first subject, including further reference to the short punctuating chords.

The exposition ends poised on a dominant seventh, before the strings descend to the development. At this point there were originally two extra bars as 'first-time' bars, but Dvořák struck them out, and wrote in 'without repeat' to make his intention quite clear. The development is almost exclusively concerned with the second subject, with only the briefest allusions to fragments of the first, but the balance is generously restored in the recapitulation, and the coda ends with the motive first heard from the timpani (in the introduction) transformed into a brass fanfare.

The slow movement is one of the strangest and most moving that Dvořák ever wrote. Its melancholy 'funeral march' opening suggests that it may have been conceived as a memorial to someone close to the composer, and the whole movement is so deeply felt that although there is no indication or record of a dedicatee, the impression is inescapable.

It starts with a theme and variations, but as is so often the way with Dvořák the theme gives birth to other subsidiary themes. The first offspring is given to the clarinets, and much is also extracted from the two plaintive sobs with which the parent theme opens. A third motive, supported by the first entry of the harp, is set in D flat major, like the fanfares of approaching angels. Henceforth the movement assumes a visionary glow crowned by a heroic theme which is again set in D flat. The whole is once more united by lachrymose echoes of the opening episode, before a short coda of quiet fanfares resolves the conflict.

Dvořák follows his longest symphonic slow movement with his shortest finale. Wagner's influence is dazzlingly if intermittently evident, both thematically and in the wonderful scoring, with an endless stream of tunes and allusions. There is even a rumbustious parody of *Frère Jacques*, or some Bohemian equivalent, between cloudy recollections of *Tannhäuser* and *Die Meistersinger*. The whole movement has a high-spirited zest and vitality which is both infectious and disarming, and a decisive conclusion is reached before it has any chance of outstaying its welcome.

Symphony No. 4 in D minor, op. 13

1. Allegro
2. Andante sostenuto e molto cantabile
3. Allegro feroce
4. Allegro con brio

On 17 November 1873, Dvořák married Anna Cermáková. At about the same time he began to write his fourth symphony, and by the time he took up his appointment as organist at the parish church of St Adalbert in Prague in the following February, the work was practically complete. Nevertheless it had to wait nearly twenty years for its first performance, and along with his first three symphonies has received discouragingly few subsequent performances.

The reason for this neglect is not hard to find or to justify in the fiercely commercial world of orchestral concerts. The first two symphonies remained in manuscript form until they were published in 1961 and 1959 respectively, while the third and fourth were not published until 1912 – eight years after his death – so that it is not surprising that the five of Dvořák's symphonies which were published during his lifetime, and so became readily available, should have so totally absorbed his share of the symphonic repertoire from the start, on the grounds of accessibility as well as musical maturity.

This state of affairs has however relegated these earlier works to an obscurity which is out of proportion to their significance and to their true worth. No one would claim that any of them is musically or structurally equal to the standard of his last five symphonies, but this arbitrary line which the circumstances of publication have drawn between his fourth symphony and his fifth completely

conceals the fact that his first symphony has considerable symphonic merit, and that each of the subsequent six at least represents a consistent and hard-earned improvement on its predecessor.

Consequently these earner works are of far more than academic interest, and it can be asserted straight away that musically and melodically they yield infinitely more pleasure than disappointment, for the real Achilles' heel of these symphonies is one which Dvořák spent most of his life, not just his early life, trying to overcome. This is quite simply his tendency to resort to repetition and discursiveness as a substitute for the development of his material.

Such a flaw is not one to be written off lightly, but equally it is not sufficiently disturbing to exclude the works totally from the repertoire. Tchaikovsky's first three symphonies – all of which were written originally in virtually the same period as Dvořák's first four – have enjoyed much better fortune in the number of performances they have been given, but then each was published shortly after it was completed, and so immediately became far more widely available.

Now that this situation has been fully rectified from the point of view of publishing. Dvořák's first four symphonies have at last the chance to find their own level on better terms, and as their many virtues become more familiar there is good reason to hope that the constantly expanding interest shown in lesser-known music will restore them to a fair and proportionate place in the repertoire.

The fourth symphony opens with an air of mystery over an ostinato bass. The immediate feeling is one of a vast reserve of pent-up energy about to be released, and indeed it is soon confirmed by an arresting fanfare for the brass choir, which builds up impressively to the first theme, announced by the full orchestra.

This first subject is truly symphonic, with bold and vigorous contours and great rhythmic vitality. By contrast the second theme (in B flat major) is typical of all that is most lyrical and melting in Dvořák, and is treated at some length before quiet echoes of the rhythmic fanfare mark the end of the exposition. By way of development this material is guided through wide-ranging modulations and transformations with Dvořák's customary ingenuity, before an extended recapitulation is followed by a brief coda.

The second movement consists of a very long theme (which pays notable tribute to *Tannhäuser*) with variations. At the end of the theme Dvořák forsakes his customary four- or eight-bar phrases to introduce an additional bar, delaying the cadence with happy consequences. In the first variation the theme is given to the oboe and violins, in the second to the cellos and in the third in a syncopated form to the woodwind. The theme is fragmented in a closely related episode which follows, leading to a short dramatic fugato section. Constantly changing orchestral colours add variety to the improvisatory nature of Dvořák's subsequent treatment of the theme, and finally the clarinets introduce a gentle coda.

The scherzo is believed to have been an independent composition when it was written some time before the remainder of the symphony, and was in fact the only excerpt of it to be performed before the complete work was given (in 1892 under Dvořák's direction) when Smetana included it in a concert in May 1874. It is a swaggering, ebullient movement, with a second subject (in unison in the woodwind) which has a strong flavour of Berlioz. The trio, however, is pure Dvořák, simply dropping without modulation into the foreign key of C major. This is village-band music par excellence, and the return to the shortened version of the scherzo is beautifully managed, while the Beethovenesque allusion to the music of the trio in the coda simply confirms the brilliance of design of this delightful movement.

The finale finds Dvořák at his most repetitive. The opening theme may be regarded as four, eight or sixteen bars long, according to interpretation, but if we assume it to consist of the first eight bars, it

is found to recur at least seventeen times during the course of the movement – eight times before the second subject even appears. Nevertheless the rewards of patience are rich, and this second theme is again typical of Dvořák at his most lyrical.

Expanded as it is into a major part of the movement's content, this sublime theme grows to a well-judged climax before allowing a brief allusion to the rhythmic opening motive. A further exploration of the lyrical theme is rudely interrupted by the brass, and the opening theme recurs in an augmented form, but this is followed by a rich and triumphant version of the second subject which now assumes an Elgarian grandeur, before the brief and exuberant conclusion.

Symphony No. 5 in F major, op. 76

1. Allegro ma non troppo
2. Andante con moto
3. Scherzo: Allegro scherzando
4. Finale: Allegro molto

Dvořák's symphony in F major is particularly significant not only because it provides the main key to the confusion over the numbering of his symphonies, but also because it marks the beginning of his true maturity as a symphonic composer. This point is the most notable because the work was written two years *before* Dvořák had even begun to enjoy any real public recognition, and it was in fact the last symphony to stem from his long apprenticeship in obscurity.

It was composed With Dvořák's customary rapidity between 15 June and 23 July 1875, and first performed four years later. When it was written, he was the organist at the parish church of St Adalbert in Prague – a post which gave him an annual salary of 126 gulden. Although some of his compositions were already being performed and appreciated locally, outside Prague he was still virtually unknown, and he could find nobody to publish his work. His only other source of income was from private tuition, from which he was earning another 60 gulden each month – roughly equal at the time to £5.

However, on the same day as he began to write the symphony, he took the first steps to present a petition for an Austrian state grant offered to help young and needy composers, and some of the compositions he submitted, including the third symphony, made a considerable impression on Brahms and the critic Hanslick who sat on the adjucating committee. In consequence Dvořák received the grant for five consecutive years, and was also strongly recommended in 1877 by Brahms to his Berlin publisher, Simrock. At last the end of the search for recognition and a publisher was in sight.

This highly encouraging development was however still a thing of the future when Dvořák began to compose his fifth symphony, and the cheerful assurance with which it is written gives no hint of the poverty of his existence, nor of the frustration he felt at his lack of recognition. Although he revised the work twelve years later, prior to its publication in 1888, these revisions were confined to minor points of orchestration and to a slight shortening of the slow movement, so that the symphony was not significantly changed from the 1875 version which Dvořák had in the meantime conducted on a variety of occasions.

Two facts combined to create the misunderstanding that persisted for nearly eighty years over the numbering of his symphonies. In the first place the composer, not knowing the fate of the score of his first symphony 'The Bells of Zlonice' subsequently regarded his second symphony (in B flat) as his first, and died in the firm belief that he had left only eight symphonies to posterity. So to him the F major symphony was No. 4, op. 24, as he indicated on the autograph score.

Secondly, in 1881 Simrock published the sixth symphony in D major as No. 1 ,op. 60, since it was the first by Dvořák to be published, and the D minor, op. 70 followed in 1885 as 'No. 2'. It was only after the success of these two that Dvořák submitted the F major – and Simrock decided to publish it as 'No.3'. Less justifiably, and against warm opposition from Dvořák, the publisher called it op. 76, since he felt its correct opus number, 24, would have an adverse effect on its novelty.

This symphony is thus probably unique in having been the subject of three numbers (3, 4 and 5) and two opus numbers, but historically its correct identity is 'Symphony No. 5 in F major, op. 24'. More important is that it should be more widely known for what it is – a symphony to delight the musician, no matter what title it is given, and a really exciting forerunner to the last four.

The first movement opens with an affectionate theme for clarinets built over eight bars entirely on the chord of F major. True to form, Dvořák picks out the rhythmic quirk of this theme – the dotted rhythm in the third and fourth bars – and develops it as one of the movement's unifying features.

His second subject is a boisterous theme in the home key, and the use of chromatic passing notes adds a delightful streak of vulgarity to its rustic colour. A contrasting third theme (in D major, and first given by the violins) proves to be one with which Dvořák was singularly reluctant to part. Nevertheless, it is sufficiently appealing to support the prominence which it is given in the exposition and the remainder of the movement.

The second movement is broadly in ternary form and its opening theme in A minor is played espressivo e dolente by the cellos, echoed by the violins. Dvořák's love of adding delicious counter-motives is beautifully illustrated when the flute and bassoon take up this theme against a perky counterpoint by the clarinet. The middle section (in the major) is delicately orchestrated and warms to a charming lilt, but after its climax retires gently before the return in a richer form of the opening motive.

The third movement follows virtually without a break, devoting its first sixteen bars to confirming the modulation (within the character of the slow movement) from A minor to the key of B flat major, in which the scherzo proper begins. Dvořák's scherzos are almost without exception happily conceived and executed but even from his pen this movement has quite unusual charm. It is beautifully proportioned, bursting with melody and wit, and includes a superbly scored trio which has so many tunes to offer that it is amusingly loath to make way for the return of the scherzo.

The dramatic beginning of the finale gives the impression of coming from another work altogether, partly no doubt due to the abrupt change of key from B flat (in which the scherzo ends) to A minor. The mood also seems to belong to another world (perhaps even the 'New World') and the skill with which this apparently discordant feeling is gradually reconciled with the remainder of the symphony is not the least of the work's fascinations.

This is achieved by taking the dramatic opening motive through a remarkable sequence of modulations, finally settling in the key of D flat. A lush second subject in the new key is repeated a fourth higher in G flat, and leads as though inevitably into a leisurely woodwind figure. This proves to be strongly related both to the middle section of the slow movement and through it to the opening subject of the symphony – the literal quotation of which is reserved for the trombones in the last exuberant bars of the work. The devise itself was not new, but its unifying effect is undeniable, as it brings one of Dvořák's most melodious scores to an exhilarating and satisfying conclusion.

Symphony No. 6 in D major, op. 60

1. Allegro non tanto
2. Adagio

3. Scherzo (Furiant): Presto
4. Finale: Allegro con spirito

It is no secret that an appalling number of remarkable, mature and satisfying orchestral compositions from the 19th and earlier centuries lies dormant just beyond the fringes of the standard classical repertoire. These are among the unwilling victims of the vicious competition for that regular place in our concert programmes which is reserved exclusively for those orchestral works which manage to cling to a position above an ill-defined point on the barometer of popular approval.

The fact that Dvořák's first six symphonies have settled just below this point is far more of a sad reflection on the way in which the economic necessities of modern concert promotion limit the actual scope of this 'top ten' than on the merits of the works themselves, and with this in mind, anyone who may anticipate a defensive vein in the presentation of these recordings is likely to be disappointed.

Originally published as Dvořák's first symphony, the D major op. 60 was in fact his sixth, and with the ever-widening interest which is developing in his earlier works it is becoming increasingly desirable to clarify their chronology and identity in order to counteract the bewildering confusion created by the composer and his publisher in their efforts to present his works in the most favourable manner.

The Sixth symphony was composed in the autumn of 1880, as the result of a request from the celebrated conductor Hans Richter and the Vienna Philharmonic, during Dvořák's visit to the Austrian capital in November 1879. With characteristic directness Dvořák wrote on that occasion to his friend Alois Göbl: 'I ... had to assure the Philharmonic that I would send them a symphony for the next season' – an assurance which he was only slightly tardy in fulfilling.

He dedicated the symphony to Richter, who was unreservedly enthusiastic about it, but as it happened, neither Richter nor the Vienna Philharmonic were to play any part in its performance. This took place in Prague under Adolf Cech on 25 March 1881 with enormous success, and although subsequently Richter conducted many performances of the work, much to Dvořák's dismay none took place in Vienna. The symphony quickly became a popular concert work in most of the other leading musical centres of Europe, and was frequently conducted by the composer himself.

Nevertheless it was to be superseded in popularity by Dvořák's three subsequent symphonies to such an extent that outside Czechoslovakia it has rarely been heard during the present century, and yet on those occasions when it is performed it is greeted with a spontaneous and astonished enthusiasm which finds difficulty in reconciling the stature of the work with its rarity in performance.

It is no detraction from Dvořák's achievement to draw attention to the ubiquitous influence of Brahms on this extraordinary work. Brahms had played an important part in encouraging Dvořák to develop his talents from as early as 1863, but the two composers did not in fact meet until late in 1878 – less than a year alter the first performance of Brahms's Second Symphony.

That Dvořák studied this work with great care is clear. There are points of similarity with his own D major symphony which are too direct to be coincidental. Nevertheless, it is vital not to over-estimate the importance of these similarities, since their contribution to the work's greatness is negligible, and there is nothing dishonourable in occasionally and modestly emulating a great master.

As with the fifth symphony, the first eight bars of the opening theme are devoted to asserting the tonic with a simplicity and calmness which only emphasise the beauty of the subsequent modulations. The movement is lyrical and yet robust, with a bucolic freshness in the woodwind and string parts which is admirably balanced by the rich grandeur of the brass writing. This is a most satisfying

movement – classical in form, economical and well-reasoned in the use of its material, and enriched by some of the most beautiful modulations to come even from Dvořák's pen.

The pastoral mood persists through the Adagio too. The opening three notes from the oboe give birth to a loving, long and beautifully shaped melody which is to be handled with perfect artistry as it passes from one enchanting form to another. Contrasting episodes are woven into the ensuing fabric which are in themselves less significant, but the dominating impression is of a beautiful melody exquisitely treated, with characteristic counter-melodies constantly enlivening the texture with a spontaneous freshness.

The Scherzo (Furiant) had to be repeated as an encore at the first performance, such was the enthusiasm for Dvořák's new symphony. Rhythmic vigour in the first subject alternates with urgent, restless hints of melody in the second, while the Trio, with its delightful writing for piccolo, has the calm of a summer's day.

The opening of the Finale comes as a surprise. Brahms's Second or Dvořák's Sixth? The orchestra is identical, so is the key, the mood (Allegro con spirito), and the tempo – alla breve. Yet a glance at the score of both shows how superficial the similarity is. Certainly Dvořák's own status as a skilful orchestrator has never been questioned, while the melodic originality and the expansive development are vintage Dvořák. Note especially the bewitching approach to the recapitulation, and the scintillating coda with its rumbustious vigour and good-humour, endowing a magnificent symphony with a worthy conclusion.

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, op. 70

1. Allegro maestoso
2. Poco adagio
3. Scherzo: Vivace – poco meno mosso
4. Allegro

The seventh is the earliest of Dvořák's nine symphonies to have captured and held popular approval. Written at the invitation of the London Philharmonic Society, it was completed in the spring of 1885 and the first performance was conducted by the composer at St James's Hall, London in April of the same year. To quote a letter Dvořák wrote a couple of days later, it was 'immensely successful and at the next performance will be a still greater success'.

Dvořák was rarely modest about his work and although his critics have no difficulty in pointing out numerous instances of hasty workmanship and naive musical thought in the majority of his compositions, his lack of modesty was in itself the inevitable result of his genuinely rustic instinct and temperament fighting for recognition in the sophisticated world of serious music.

Six years had passed since Dvořák had written his previous symphony, which had been published as 'No. 1'. The actual numbering of his symphonies has for a long time been a source of confusion for which the composer must be held responsible. The second to be published was the D minor, op. 70, the manuscript of which adds even more to the confusion, bearing on its title page the inscription 'Sixth Symphony'. It was nevertheless the seventh he wrote, and it is refreshing to find the trend of giving his symphonies their correct numbering to be well established at last.

The development in inspiration and mastery which this symphony demonstrates in comparison with the previous six is one of those miracles of creative progress which can only be explained in terms of genius rather than logic. For this is a truly great symphony by any standards, and the fact that Dvořák set out to write a work 'which must be such as to shock the world' was more a sign of passionate sincerity than over-grandiose ambition.

For some time Dvořák had been anxious to start a new symphonic work as a result of hearing Brahms's recently composed third symphony. Brahms was himself Dvořák's most influential champion as well as his sternest critic, constantly rebuking him for carelessness while encouraging him with valuable advice and generous assistance. The invitation from the London Philharmonic Society provided Dvořák with the final spur to embark on the new work. It was completed in a little over three months.

The D minor is perhaps the least extrovert of all the symphonies, and the melodic richness of the score leaves little space for the weak moments which are so frustrating in many of the earlier works. The pent-up sense of inner tragedy and strength which characterises all four movements is handled with a dramatic ability which makes its climaxes both inevitable and over-powering. The genial charm and humour which is to be so characteristic of the Eighth and Ninth Symphonies is here only fleetingly apparent.

The first movement is a magnificent arch of compact symphonic thought. Between the restless but hushed opening and the calm and relaxed concluding bars there is a passionate and menacing tempest of immense uncompromising power. The themes are bold, direct and urgent, and the moments of repose are few. Even these are generally accompanied by a restlessness in the lower strings which never permits the tension to relax below the surface until in the closing bars, all passion spent, the way is prepared for the majestic glory of the second movement.

The second is still the longest movement of the work, even though the composer shortened it by more than a quarter after the first performance. It is one of the finest examples of Dvořák's ability to write a succession of incredibly beautiful and inspired melodies, and weave them into a formal pattern where the pattern itself is made irrelevant by the unbroken emotional appeal of the music itself. The horn solo is one of those great moments of awakening which, no matter how often they are heard, come as an ecstatic and uplifting surprise, and the final climax brings with it a sense of relief which is magnificently approached, achieved and passed, dying gently and gracefully away to absolute peace. There is so much beauty in this movement that one can only conjecture whether it might have contained even more in its original form.

The universal appeal of the first two movements blends happily with the essentially national character of the scherzo. Whereas in the last two symphonies the Bohemian influence is scattered fairly liberally over all the movements, here it is concentrated in the last two movements, and predominantly in the Scherzo. The idyllic and pastoral trio is in striking contrast to the vigour and tautness of the scherzo, and contains at the outset one of those long, meandering and thrillingly beautiful passages which are among the most telling of Dvořák's contribution to the symphonic literature.

The heartfelt opening bars of the finale are still in the tragic mood which has predominated so far – a mood which is only to be relieved by the arrival of the second subject in the dominant major. Played first by the cellos with a filigree ornamentation provided by the violins, it is a broad, warm and confident line which vies with other more violent ideas as the movement proceeds. As the end approaches, climax follows climax in a succession of waves, to be crowned by one final wave (molto maestoso) when all the pent-up fury is magically dispersed by a brilliant but brief modulation to the subdominant, before the final chords triumphantly conclude the greatest of Dvořák's symphonies.

Symphony No. 8 in G major, op. 88

1. Allegro con brio
2. Adagio

3. Allegretto grazioso
4. Allegro ma non troppo

A direct result of Dvořák's type of inspiration was that it tended to create forms to suit its ideas. His eighth symphony (1889) is the most 'unorthodox' of his symphonies in the classical sense, without being self-consciously so, and yet is formally completely satisfying through the composer's instinctive ability to use his ideas in such a way as to give the impression of a firm formal structure. But the sheer abundance of ideas in the work is so great that the resulting forms are impossible to imitate since they depend for their very existence on the ideas themselves, and a formal analysis would be of little assistance.

Dvořák composed very quickly and hated to revise his symphonic works. The nearest he came to revision (apart from the Fifth Symphony op. 76, known as the No. 3 in F) was his genius for adding counter melodies when he came to orchestrate his sketches. Of this there are innumerable examples, but two will suffice – the writing for trombones and trumpets before the coda of the first movement, and the trumpet counterpoint to the first part of the flute variation in the last movement.

The G major symphony is fundamentally based on the alternating tonalities of minor and major. The first and third movements (with frequent excursions into other keys) rest firmly on G minor and major, the second on C minor and major, and the finale, which is a very free form of theme with variations, between G major and C minor This in itself makes the work both novel and interesting, while the writing for the individual sections of the orchestra is so vital that performers derive as much pleasure from it as the listener. The writing for horns and violas is as varied as it is for any of the woodwind, and contributes its full share to the exuberance of the result.

Dvořák himself is reported to have said that in this symphony he wanted to write a work with individual ideas worked out in a new way. He succeeded in doing this and yet in giving the work an impression of unity which belies its unorthodoxy. Having done so, he first of all presented it to the Franz Josef Academy in Prague (on being elected a member), then offered it as his 'thesis' to the University of Cambridge on receiving an honorary Doctorate of Music. The irony of offering such an academically 'incorrect' work to both of these distinguished bodies seems to have passed without comment.

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, op. 95 'Z Noveho sveta' (From the New World)

1. Adagio – Allegro molto
2. Largo
3. Molto vivace
4. Allegro con fuoco

The work which can be reasonably claim to be best-known, the most popular and the most frequently performed in the symphonic repertoire is too familiar to require any form of musical introduction, but same of the circumstances accompanying its creation and publication tell us much about the mature Dvořák as a person. The symphony 'from the New World' must be one of the few acknowledged masterpieces to be acclaimed as such from its very first performance, and the creator of such a rarity is inevitably of more than usual interest.

Dvořák's ninth and last symphony was written early in 1893, when he was at the peak of his career – idolised, financially carefree and beloved by musicians and audiences alike. He was fifty-two years old, content with his work, and very alert to all that was going on around him in his bustling new surroundings, nearly four thousand miles from his home.

His visit to America was the outcome of an unexpected and far-sighted Invitation which arrived first in the form of a telegram on 6 June 1891. It was from Mrs Jeanette M. Thurber, the founder and President of the National Conservatory of Music of America – and offered Dvořák an annual salary of 15000 dollars (equivalent at the time to just over £3000) if he would agree to teach for two years at the Conservatory. This was nearly thirty times as much as he was receiving in his six-months-old appointment at the Prague Conservatoire.

He would be required to conduct ten concerts of his own music each year, four of which were to be given in New York by the students under his training, and the remainder in other American cities. In addition, he would be called upon to teach composition for two hours per day three times a week, as well as supervising orchestral rehearsals for a further four hours per week. Otherwise his time was to be his own, along with four months vacation each year.

The invitation was in every way generous, and after some heart-searching and prolonged consultations with his friends he accepted. He left Prague early in September 1892, and arrived in New York on the 27th with his wife and two of his six children. The remaining four children joined him in the following year, and in all he stayed in America for three academic years.

It would be unjust to infer that Dvořák's acceptance of the very tempting New York offer (so soon after accepting a similar but financially incomparable post at the Prague Conservatoire) casts doubts on the sincerity of his interest in the nationalism of the Bohemian school of composition, for it is well to remember, that whatever his biographers may say, Dvořák aspired above all to be a universal composer, not simply a national one.

His reception in New York was magnificent. On 21 October 1892 he gave his first concert in America at the Carnegie Hall, and the programme included his most recent major works – the trilogy of overtures which he had finally decided to call 'In Nature's Realm', 'Carnival' and 'Othello'. They were excellently received by a musical public which was already very favourably disposed towards his work.

Conditions were thus highly auspicious for the composition of his new symphony, and the beginning of 1893 saw him hard at work on the first sketches. The work was completed on 24 May – just a week before the arrival in New York of his family. It was first performed at a Philharmonic Society public rehearsal under Anton Seidl on 15th December, ready for the concert on the following day, and was instantly an unqualified success.

In the meantime Dvořák had been busy negotiating its publication. Few composers have been able to maintain unruffled relations with their publishers, and Dvořák was no exception. His principal publisher was Simrock in Berlin, to whom, as a completely unknown composer, he had been strongly recommended by Brahms in December 1877. In the following year Simrock had published the first set of *Slavonic Dances* as piano duets, for which he paid Dvořák 75 dollars, and in 1879 a contract was drawn up giving Simrock first refusal of all Dvořák's future compositions.

The incredible success of these *Dances* made a fortune for Simrock, but at frequent intervals Dvořák threatened to take his new works elsewhere because of constant wrangles over what fee he should receive. Relations grew worse in a prolonged dispute in 1885 over his fee for the Seventh symphony (in D minor), and were seriously ruptured when Dvořák gave his Requiem op. 89 to Novello to publish in 1890.

For this alleged breach of contract Simrock threatened to sue Dvořák in court, but Dvořák's stature was such that he could afford to ignore this threat, and his appointment in New York brought

home to Simrock the strength of the composer's position. Shortly before Dvořák left for America Simrock approached him once more.

However, Dvořák made him wait for twelve months before offering him a collection of works which included among others the 'New World' symphony and the trilogy of overtures. His demands were in the circumstances ridiculously modest – he asked for 500 dollars for the symphony and the same for the set of overtures, adding in his letter 'I am not asking anything more than what you have always paid me'.

In saying this, Dvořák was only telling half of the truth, for although it is true that this was no more than he had been paid, he did not mention it was substantially less than he had expected for the D minor Symphony eight years earlier, for which he had insisted on 1500 dollars, while Simrock had refused to pay more than 750.

In any event, it is not surprising that Simrock agreed to this latest request without argument, and Dvořák's new symphony was duly published in 1894 for a fee which was nevertheless nearly twice as great as his total *annual* income had been when he married twenty years earlier.

Overtures

'In Nature's Realm' is the first of a sequence of three independent overtures (the other two being 'Carnival' and 'Othello'), loosely connected in that one theme occurs in all three, and in each instance is first given to the clarinets. The provisional title for the triptych was 'Nature, Life and Love', Dvořák's aim being to depict the human soul in the grip of man's most powerful emotional experience. It was first performed on 28 April 1892 at the Prague Rudolfinum, just sixteen days after the first complete performance of Dvořák's Symphony No. 4, during a series of concerts which he gave of his own music before he left for America. Although it has no written programme, the subject of the work is a refreshing view of a man gradually becoming aware of the vibrant and elevating power of Nature when he relaxes sufficiently to appreciate it, as opposed to its indifferent effect on his life (depicted in the introduction) when he is only preoccupied with his worldly affairs. Delicately scored and melodious, it is a thoroughly pleasing example of Dvořák's mature style in this genre of composition.

Dvořák began work on the 'Carnival' Overture on 28 July 1891, shortly after his visit to Cambridge to receive an honorary degree, and completed it on 12 September, just before he left for England once again, this time to visit Birmingham to conduct his *Requiem Mass*. The Nature theme appears here principally in the Andantino con moto, on clarinet and, later, on cor anglais.

The *Scherzo capriccioso* was written between 4 April and 2 May 1883, and was first performed in Prague later in the latter month. Dvořák conducted this brilliant and effective orchestral showpiece the following year at the Crystal Palace, and it was to prove one of his most outstandingly successful works. It is dominated by two contrasting themes: an energetic idea announced by the horns at the opening, and a gentle waltz-like tune that appears in the strings. A number of subsidiary dance and song-like melodies impart an unmistakable Bohemian flavour. The overture 'My Home' was written in January 1882, almost seven years after the Fifth Symphony. It belongs to the incidental music which Dvořák wrote for Samberk's play about Josef Kajetán Tyl – a well-known Czech actor and writer in the first half of the nineteenth century. The play was both patriotic and inspiring, and the two principal themes of the overture (and indeed of the remainder of the incidental music) are taken from Czech songs – 'Where is my home?', which some will recognise as Czechoslovakia's national anthem, and a charming bucolic song 'In the farmyard everything is crowing and cackling', particularly associated with Tyl. The overture's form is self-explanatory, and the marked feeling of Beethoven's

influence which emerges at several points does nothing to undermine the work's truly national character; likewise its hesitant, tentative opening, which is startlingly and brilliantly transformed in Dvořák's jubilant coda to complete an overture which should give real pleasure, even to the most fastidious listener.

Ray Minshull

Symphonies

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) composed symphonies from the beginning of his career as composer up to his stay in America – the penultimate creative period of his life, and spent the last period writing symphonic poems and operas. Unlike Johannes Brahms who finished and published his first symphony only in 1877, Dvořák seems to have been unaffected by Richard Wagner's warnings that, after Beethoven, no one can write symphonies.

Symphony No. 1 in C minor 'The Bells of Zlonice', sine op. (B. 9; 1865)

1. [Allegro]
2. Adagio molto
3. Allegretto
4. Finale: Allegro animato

Dvořák's *First Symphony* (called *The Bells of Zlonice* by the composer at a time when he considered it lost) was composed in 1865, when its author wrote in the early Romantic style and was inspired by the models of Beethoven and Mendelssohn. His creative outburst of that year is usually ascribed to his falling in love with a young actress in the theatre where he played the viola, Josefina Čermáková, later his sister-in-law. In his works of that time the composer seems to review his past life. It begins with the distant echo of the church bells in Zlonice, the town where he began his musical career, through the vigorous rhythmical motive in the bass instruments, a symbol of the path for which he had been predetermined by fate, to the triumphant finale full of energy and optimism. The keys of the individual movements also tell of the work's inspiration by a gesture analogous to Beethoven's Fifth.

Symphony No. 2 in B flat major, op. 4 (B. 12; 1865, rev. 1887)

1. Allegro con moto
2. Poco adagio
3. Scherzo: Allegro con brio
4. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Shortly after finishing the symphony, Dvořák wrote his first cello concerto in A major and particularly a large song cycle *The Cypresses* from the mood of which it is obvious that his love was not reciprocal. Shortly afterwards (August – early October 1865), he composed his *Second Symphony*. Its initially pastoral character gradually acquiring the charge of fresh energy illustrates the composer's liberation from the hopeless emotional state. The fact that a lyrical theme of the last movement appeared, 35 years later, in his opera *Rusalka* has already been pointed out. There, after the words "For your love ... for your beauty ... you human soul should be pardoned by God!" closing the opera the theme expresses the catharsis of the love relation between the Prince and Rusalka.

Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, op. 10 (B. 34; 1873, rev. 1887/89)

1. Allegro moderato
2. Adagio molto, tempo di Marcia
3. Finale: Allegro vivace

The heroic and dramatic tones of the finale, however, hint at another of Dvořák's operas, *Alfred*, composed in 1870 to the German libretto of Karl Theodor Körner on the theme of national liberation struggle. It represents Dvořák's second creative period in which he leaned towards Lisztian and Wagnerian neo-Romanticism. In this spirit, he wrote the short patriotic hymn *Heirs of the White Mountain*, his first decisive success with the public presented at a concert in Prague in March 1873. In the same spirit (and with a theme echoing the final part of the cantata) Dvořák composed his *Third Symphony*. Its first movement has the same pathos – and is in the same key – as the symphonic poem *Vyšehrad* written by Bedřich Smetana shortly afterwards. It was thanks to Smetana as conductor that the symphony was the first of Dvořák's output in this field played in public in 1874 at a concert of the Philharmonia Society in Prague. The original version of the second movement is unknown because it was reworked by the composer who replaced this part of the autograph by a copy written by his copyist. The third movement, however, had its peculiar experimental character from the very beginning. In it, Dvořák combined – as he did in some chamber music works of that time – the scherzo and finale in an original formation overflowing with joy and excitement. It is there that is discernible the characteristic feature of Dvořák's output, namely giving romantic contents a classical frame.

Symphony No. 4 in D minor, op. 13 (B. 41; 1874, rev. 1887/88)

1. Allegro
2. Andante sostenuto e molto cantabile
3. Scherzo: Allegro feroce
4. Allegro con brio

The joy, excitement and optimism characteristic of the third symphony of Dvořák, composed in 1873 shortly after the success of his brief patriotic hymn *Heirs of the White Mountain*, gave way in the composer's following output to works with a darker and more dramatic tone. It was probably due to the failed attempt to stage the first version of the opera *King and Charcoal Burner* and also the opposition of the family of his beloved, Anna (younger sister of the composer's one-time love Josefina Čermáková who had, however, rejected him) to their marriage which the young couple had to fight for hard. An indication of it was the overture *Romeo and Juliet* treating the scene in the monuments and destroyed by the composer, and two string quartets of autumn 1873. It was at that time, it seems, that the *Capriccio* for large orchestra, the germ of a new, *Fourth Symphony* was written in which it then became the scherzo. The relation of its main theme with the piece *In Troubled Times*, part of the later piano duet cycle *From the Bohemian Forest* seems to hint at its content. The symphony is the last one echoing Lisztian and Wagnerian influences characteristic of the composer's second creative period which was then drawing to a close. At the same time, Dvořák's typical tendency to give romantic ideas a classical frame begins to be clearly discernible here. Romantic pathos and vaulted melodies of the strings are balanced by a rhythmical vigour, an occasional expression of Dvořák's typical humour, and a joyous, active resolve which, eventually, prevail. Of the original version, only the scherzo was played at a concert which happened to be Bedřich Smetana's last assignment as conductor. In the late 1880s the composer reworked the symphony and conducted it himself in April 1890 as part of a program of farewell concerts before his departure for America where he was to become director of *The National Conservatory of Music* in New York.

Symphony No. 5 in F major, op. 76 (B. 54; 1875, rev. 1887)

1. Allegro ma non troppo
2. Andante con moto
3. Scherzo: Allegro scherzando
4. Finale: Allegro molto

The new version of his opera *King and Charcoal Burner* which had been produced with success at the end of 1874, marked the beginning of Dvořák's third creative period, usually known as Slavonic. As early as 1875, which was a fruitful year for him, Dvořák wrote his *Fifth*, "Pastoral" *Symphony*. It, however, resembles a pastoral idyll only in the first three parts. The finale, one of Dvořák's most powerful symphonic movements, is rather a rustic drama, from the initial search for the main key which is established only after more than fifty bars. Hans von Bülow to whom the symphony was dedicated thanked for it in a well-known letter in which he appreciated the dedication "more than a grand cross of a Prince".

Symphony No. 6 in D major, op. 60 (B. 112; 1880)

1. Allegro non tanto
2. Adagio
3. Scherzo (Furiant)
4. Finale: Allegro con spirito

Dvořák's *Sixth Symphony* was composed five years later. Those five years of his Slavonic period first saw the creation of totally different musical forms – from the *Moravian Duets* to the *Slavonic Rhapsodies* and the first series of *Slavonic Dances*. In late summer 1880 Dvořák began to write his symphony in D major which he finished in October of the same year. Conductor Václav Talich described it as "Czech Christmas symphony", most probably because of the delicate but very intensive lyricism of the slow movement. Particularly remarkable is the buoyant scherzo in the form of the Czech folk dance *furiant*. The vigour of the final movement occasionally reminds of the humour of Papa Haydn. Viennese conductor Hans Richter who had probably inspired the work and to whom it was dedicated did not conduct its premiere. He conducted it only in 1882 in London, one month after it was produced there under August Manns. The work was first played in Prague in March 1881, at a concert of the Philharmonia society, conducted by Adolf Čech. In the same year, the symphony was published by Simrock as "First"; this false numbering resulted in many subsequent errors in the review of the composer's development, particularly after the older Fifth Symphony was later published as "Third". Dvořák's Sixth is since long ago part of the repertory of many leading orchestras in the world and is a perfect example of the middle period of its authors life.

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, op. 70 (B. 141; 1884-85, rev. 1885)

1. Allegro maestoso
2. Poco adagio
3. Scherzo: Vivace
4. Finale: Allegro

In 1883-1885 Dvořák experienced a big, profound, inner struggle. Heady, growing foreign success (chamber music, *Stabat mater*, symphonies, and also opera – the triumph of *The Peasant a Rogue* in Dresden and Hamburg) brought many new artistic and personal contacts, many influences and offers, many disturbing and unsettling problems. Foreign friends told Dvořák that his close attachment to his native soil, his being bound to national cultural traditions was unsuitable for his career, that he should move to Vienna or somewhere to Germany which would provide a better launching pad for his great flight. But even internally, the conversations with the cosmopolitan and

world views of different personalities, such as Hanslick or Brahms, had a disturbing and provocative influence on what had been, until then Dvořák's relatively balanced outlook, one that had not admitted deep problems. And there was also personal pain, the death of his beloved mother, which stirred the composer's most inner emotions and gave rise to tones in his music never heard before. Signals of the forthcoming struggle were reflected in the Beethoven-like expansive Quartet in C Major of 1880, the storm was in full force in the big Piano Trio in F minor, Dvořák's Czech stubbornness found expression even in the orchestral *Scherzo capriccioso*, in some parts of the four-hand piano cycle *From the Bohemian Forest*, and notably in the striking orchestral *Husitská* dramatic overture. Dvořák discovered one outlet by inclining towards the Erben national tradition in the cantata *The Spectre's Bride*, but the decisive battle was fought in the *Seventh Symphony in D minor*. The external impetus for writing it was a request from the *London Philharmonic Society* which, in June 1884, had made the composer – on the basis of his exceptional and many appearances in England – its honorary member. An important factor in its technical concept was certainly Brahms' Third Symphony in F Major, finished shortly before; but the main inspiration was Dvořák's direct internal and external experience, for instance, the turbulent nationality atmosphere around the ongoing activities of the newly opened National Theatre.

We sense right away the deep inner predisposition in the first, dark beats of the composition:

The ballad-like tone is similar to the works immediately preceding it; the fragmentary, aphoristic entrance of instruments, as though wishing to introduce fateful, conflict views into gloomy thoughts of this "hour of truth"; the atmosphere of the recently completed *Husitská* dramatic overture resounds again and again. In the second movement the country-mother seems to speak to the exhausted fighter.

She shows him what deep sources he can draw on for strength in the new struggles, and the radiant magnificence of life after victory: of the many other themes in this movement let us cite at least one that is breathtakingly beautiful: the fascinating rhythms of the scherzo, a remembrance of some unfinished dance, an unfinished movement of love in life have belonged ever since its London première in April 1885 (under the baton of the composer), to the most supremely enchanting aspects of the work, and the finale's fierce struggle, bringing in the darkly obstinate gesture of the first theme is soon replaced by the manly, wise song of the secondary idea sweeping all in its wake as it hastens towards the end, whose dearly-bought happiness is finally heard in the theme which at first battled in the role of the antagonist. Following this fierce struggle with the angel came the evening-light oratorio *St. Ludmila*, now based on the acquired certainties of a personality who, to date, had not betrayed his ideals but had reached an understanding of them from a far broader and more deeply viewed position regarding the meaning of creation and of life.

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Basking in the glow of this human and artistic height of maturity now came a number of works fully synthesizing Dvořák's inventional proximity to the most profound sources of personal, national and timely typicality, combined with a perfect mastery of the tectonic order. After the second series of *Slavonic Dances*, these included notably the marvellous second Piano Quintet in A Major and the opera *The Jacobin*; there also was a revision of many older, as yet unpublished compositions, on which Dvořák now impressed his full technical mastery.

Symphony No. 8 in G major, op. 88 (B. 163; 1889)

1. Allegro con brio
2. Adagio
3. Allegretto grazioso
4. Allegro ma non troppo

The Eighth Symphony in G Major of 1889 is once again the fruit of late summer and early autumn; it is a kind of thanksgiving for the beautiful gift of life, Nature, and the human community. With a wise and mature smile, Dvořák raised a rich gamut of experience to levels of heroism and accompanied its diverse and wide current with the optimistically balanced views of a man standing midway through life.

The richness and variety of moods of Dvořák's Eighth are truly exceptional. However, at the outset of the first movement, which on the whole maintains the classical sonata form, in the introduction of the "superfluous" meditative theme which then proceeds to return twice in the form of divisions in the movement, we find a bright mosaic of impressions, from the pastoral and idyllic, to the hymn-like or fanfare march, from choral concentrations to dramatic turbulence.

Even more variable perhaps is the *Adagio*, according to Otakar Šourek a romantic picture of life at an old castle: it includes tragic pathos and the slightly airy trouvére serenade, knightly glitter and the nostalgia of hazy horizons.

The melancholy waltz of the scherzo finds its counterpart in the intense folk rhythms of the trio – and in the coda even in a *furiant*. In the finale, in the form of variations on a theme introduced by a clear trumpet fanfare, each of its units provides a differently-hued and redrawn picture framed in the gold of imposing animation.

The symphony's first performance was given in 1890 in Prague, in Frankfurt on the Main, and in London. The composer himself conducted it and again won exceptional acclaim. But he had had a disagreement with his main publisher, Simrock, and the work therefore was printed by the London firm of Novello; this, and the fact that the composer performed it on the occasion of being given an honorary degree of Doctor of Music of Cambridge University with the Eighth as his "dissertation", was why it is sometimes known as the *English* symphony. But in reality it is one of Dvořák's most Czech symphonies and it is correct to read into it a deep linkage with Smetana's symphonic poem *From Bohemia's Woods and Fields* from the cycle *My Country*.

Symphony No. 9 in E minor 'From the new World', op. 95 (B. 178; 1893)

1. Adagio – Allegro molto
2. Largo
3. Scherzo: Molto vivace
4. Allegro con fuoco

Soon after completion of the Symphony in G Major, Dvořák began working on something else, a still more profound and broader balance sheet of his life and views on the most fundamental questions of life and death in general: he wrote his Requiem not as mass for the dead, but as a compact reply to everything he regarded as significant in fudging the purpose of human existence. And once again – on a somewhat lighter and more specifically illustrative level – he dealt with this theme in a triptych of concert overtures, *In Nature's Realm*, *Carnival* and *Othello* (Nature, Life and Love). He had now decided to take an important step – to move, but not forever, to New York as director of the conservatory, established there by Mrs. Jeanette Thurber.

He prepared seriously for this position; he tried to learn more than what the Czech public knew about the history of this young country and its culture, and he left for the States in 1892 with a gift in hand, his cantata *Te Deum*, to mark the 400th anniversary of America's discovery by Columbus. In this work he incorporated his preconceived ideas about the music of the North American peoples, especially the Native Americans, as he had learned about it in Bohemia from literature and from a folklore appearance by one such travelling troupe.

And Dvořák's first work to be born on this new soil was a symphony – his *Ninth*, and last, for which he finally chose the key of E minor. Although he wanted – as in his *Te Deum* – to lend the atmosphere of the work several characteristic features of North Americal folkloric groups, this time including also African (in this case influenced in turn by the folk music of the Scots and the Irish), he was unable to write other than spontaneously, that is to say in a way reflecting experience in a milieu so different from Europe but also showing an increased longing for home, friends and those members of his family who had remained in Bohemia. The thematic material of the work is naturally pure Dvořák; this was no taking over of ready-made folklore themes and incorporating them into a symphonic mosaic. Only the virgin soil of the States, where no basic discussion had yet gone on about the question of nationality in art – something which had occurred in Bohemia 40 years back and was concluded by the ideas and the work of Bedřich Smetana who allowed the direct use of the folk song only in quite exceptional cases – could have become the scene of such confused and almost fruitless debates as to what Dvořák was actually doing. Only one theme – the concluding idea of the first movement of the symphony can be regarded as a citation of part of the Negro spiritual *Swing Low*, but without the original first bar (!). On the contrary, the famous theme of the Largo can be found in the composer's sketchbooks from its birth until its final appearance, produced with the aid of a blue pencil in the hand written score; it is so personal, universally comprehensible and natural that set to the text of *Going Home* it reached the broadest audience as a kind of folk song, and with this erroneous designation it was even played by the Scots military bagpipe ensemble!

Otherwise the main ideas of the work – although several features appear in it of non-Czech folk music, such as the diminished seventh in minor key or the pentatonic scale – have a purely Dvořák character, evident at once in the main themes of the outer movements.

And in the scherzo's trio there are such strong strains of Czech country music and the cooing of doves at Vysoká – one of Dvořák's favourite pastimes was pigeon-fancying – that not even here could one possibly dream of saying he had betrayed his basic credo of a truly national composer.

The enormous success of the première in New York's *Carnegie Hall* in December 1893, began the path of glory of this most frequently played romantic symphony (Anton Seidel conducted the New York Philharmonic), overshadowing the two previous symphonies that were, compositionally speaking, unquestionably more ingenious. In the meantime the composer had been reconciled to the publisher Simrock and so the work was able to appear again in Berlin right afterwards, in the following year. In order to avoid holding up the proofs by sending them across the ocean, the proofreading was done for Simrock by Johannes Brahms, the dedicated editor also of Mozart, Schumann and Chopin, and who in this way put his young friend Dvořák in the company of composers dear to him.

Jarmil Burghauser