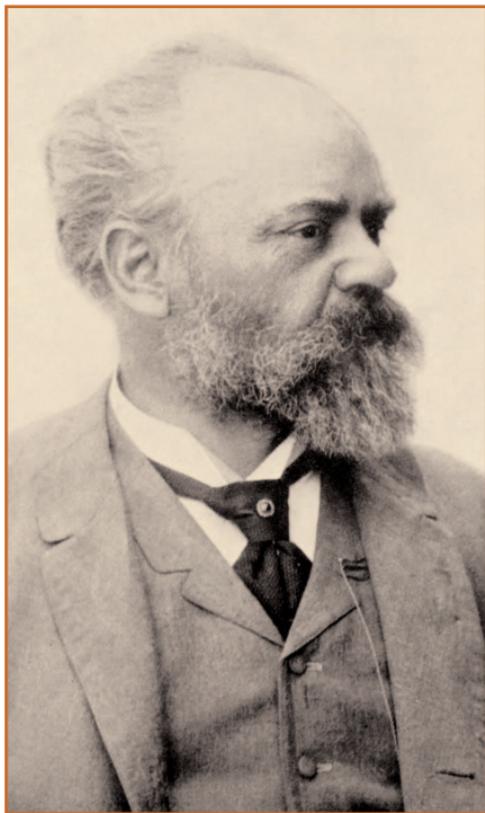




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Antonín
DVOŘÁK

Complete Solo
Piano Music

Poetic Tone Pictures

Two Little Pearls

Stefan Veselka

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Complete Solo Piano Music, Volume 3

Antonín Dvořák was born in 1841, the son of a butcher and innkeeper in the village of Nelahozeves, near the Bohemian town of Kralupy, some forty miles north of Prague. It was natural that he should at first have been expected to follow the family trade, as the eldest son. His musical abilities, however, soon became apparent and were encouraged by his father, who in later years abandoned his original trade, to earn something of a living as a zither player. After primary schooling he was sent to lodge with an uncle in Zlonice and was there able to acquire the necessary knowledge of German and improve his abilities as a musician, hitherto acquired at home in the village band and in 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, where he studied for the following two years.

On leaving the Organ School, Dvořák earned his living as a viola-player in a band under the direction of Karel Komzák, an ensemble that was to form the nucleus of the Czech Provisional Theatre Orchestra, established in 1862. Four years later Smetana was appointed conductor at the theatre, where his operas *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia* and *The Bartered Bride* had already been performed. It was not until 1871 that Dvořák resigned from the orchestra, devoting himself more fully to composition, as his music began to attract favourable local attention. In 1873 he married a singer from the chorus of the theatre and 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 to Dvořák in 1874, when his application for an Austrian government award brought his music to the attention of the critic Eduard Hanslick in Vienna and subsequently to that of Brahms, a later member of the examining committee. The granting of this award for five consecutive years was of material assistance. It was through this contact that, impressed by Dvořák's *Moravian Duets* entered for the award of 1877,

Brahms was able to arrange for their publication by Simrock, who commissioned a further work, *Slavonic Dances*, for piano duet. The success of these publications introduced Dvořák's music to a much wider public, for which it held some exotic appeal. As his reputation grew, there were visits to Germany and to England, where he was always received with greater enthusiasm than might initially have been accorded a Czech composer in Vienna.

In 1883 Dvořák had rejected a tempting proposal that he should write a German opera for Vienna. At home he continued to contribute to Czech operatic repertoire, an important element in re-establishing national musical identity. The invitation to take up a position in New York was another matter. In 1891 he had become professor of composition at Prague Conservatory and in the summer of the same year he was invited to become director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. With the backing of Jeannette Thurber and her husband, this institution was intended to foster American music, hitherto dominated by musicians from Europe or largely trained there. Whatever the ultimate success or failure of the venture, Dvořák's contribution was seen as that of providing a blue-print for American national music, following the example of Czech national music, which owed so much to him. The musical results of Dvořák's time in America must lie chiefly in his own music, notably in his *Symphony 'From the New World'*, his *American Quartet* and *American Quintet* and his *Violin Sonata*, works that rely strongly on the European tradition that he had inherited, while making use of melodies and rhythms that might be associated in one way or another with America. By 1895 Dvořák was home for good, resuming work at the Prague Conservatory, of which he became director in 1901. His final works included a series of symphonic poems and two more operas, to add to the nine he had already composed. He died in Prague in 1904.

Keith Anderson

Dvořák's Piano Music

Dvořák is better known for his orchestral works and his chamber music than for anything he wrote for the piano, although one of the *Humoresques* retains a place in popular repertoire.

The *Dumka and Furiant, Op. 12, B. 136/137*, were composed in autumn 1884. A *Dumka* consists mostly of the alteration between slow and fast parts and has its origin in the folk- music of the Ukraine. The slow parts are narrative, lyric, and dream-like, and the fast ones change suddenly to dance movements. The *Dumka* is not the most typical of Dvořák's, but the work can nevertheless be counted among his most beautiful works, since it is a rich, elegiac, and deeply-felt work. The brilliant *Furiant, Op. 12, No. 2*, is, like the *Furiant* from *Op. 85*, a typically Czech folk-dance.

The *Two Little Pearls, B. 156*, are both small recital pieces. They were written in autumn 1887 and published for the first time by F. A. Urbanek as part of a collection called "the young Czech pianist". The first

has the title *Do kola* (In a ring) and the second *Dědeček tančí s babičkou* (Grandpa dances with Grandma).

The piano cycle *Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 85, B.161*, of 1889 consists of thirteen different pieces. It contains such diverse elements as the *Peasant Ballad* and *Furiant*, which have a distinct feeling of Czech-Bohemian folk-music, and *At the Old Castle* and *Reverie*, which have something of the mood of a sad dream. Also included are very cheerful, comic pieces like *Toying*, *Goblins' Dance* and *Serenade*, the last originally called *Comical Serenade*. The two pieces *Spring Song* and *Titte-tattle* evoke a homely idyll. The first piece *On the Road at Night*, *Bacchanal* and *At a Hero's Grave* are serious in tone. The last of these has the peculiarity of having no recognisable solid tonal centre in its resolution. Dvořák, deeply religious, completes his cycle with the piece *At Svata Hora*, a reference to a place of pilgrimage near the city of Příbram. The piece combines a chant with downward moving cascades of sounds.

Stefan Veselka

Stefan Veselka



Stefan Veselka was born at Stavanger in Norway in 1968, the son of Czech parents, and is related to the composer Leoš Janáček. From 1986 he studied piano at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, moving in 1988 to the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin, where he successfully completed his studies. Following his début in 1985, he made numerous successful appearances as a soloist or as a chamber musician throughout Europe, in Japan and in the United States. He has been a prize-winner in several national and international piano competitions, including the European Piano Competition in Luxemburg, the Beethoven International Piano Competition in Vienna, and the A. Schnabel Competition in Berlin. In 1988 he was awarded the SHELL Prize. He has collaborated with well known orchestras and conductors in important international festivals and in major concert venues. He has also worked for some years as a conductor. His recordings include releases of works by Prokofiev, Debussy, Lutoslawski, Webern and Valen.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
Complete Solo Piano Music, Volume 3

Dumka and Furiant, Op. 12 / B. 136 and 137	8:19
1 No. 1: Dumka in C minor: Allegretto moderato	4:21
2 No. 2: Furiant in G minor: Vivace	3:58
Two Little Pearls, B. 156	3:53
3 No. 1: In a Ring!: Vivace	1:18
4 No. 2: Grandpa dances with Grandma: Allegretto grazioso	2:35
Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 85 / B. 161	59:17
5 No. 1: On the Road at Night: Allegro moderato	5:20
6 No. 2: Toying: Allegretto leggiero	4:20
7 No. 3: At the Old Castle: Lento	4:58
8 No. 4: Spring Song: Poco allegro	4:10
9 No. 5: Peasant's Ballad: Allegro giusto	3:45
10 No. 6: Reverie: Andante	4:55
11 No. 7: Furiant: Allegro feroce	2:46
12 No. 8: Goblins' Dance: Allegretto	3:14
13 No. 9: Serenade: Moderato e molto cantabile	5:22
14 No. 10: Bacchanal: Vivacissimo	4:47
15 No. 11: Tittle-Tattle: Andante con moto	4:24
16 No. 12: At a Hero's Grave: Tempo di marcia	7:06
17 No. 13: At svata hora: Poco lento	4:11



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Although Dvořák's piano works are perhaps the least known of all his music, he wrote imaginatively and attractively for the instrument and created some of his best known works such as the two sets of *Slavonic Dances* and the *Legends* originally for piano duet. The solo piano works were mainly intended as short dance or atmospheric movements, alternating between passion and intimacy, exuberance and lyricism, for performance in the concert hall rather than the salon. This third disc of Dvořák's Complete Published Solo Piano Music focuses on the *Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 85*, a cycle of thirteen pieces comprising such diverse yet characteristically Czech elements as the folkloristic *Peasant Ballad* and *Furiant*, the melancholy, dream-like *At the Old Castle*, the cheerfully comic *Toying*, *Goblins' Dance* and *Serenade*, as well as the deeply religious *At Svata Hora*, a place of pilgrimage near the city of Příbram.

Antonín
DVOŘÁK
(1841-1904)

Complete Published Solo Piano Music • 3

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|---------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 - 2 | Dumka and Furiant, Op. 12 / B. 136 and 137 | 8:19 |
| 3 - 4 | Two Little Pearls, B. 156 | 3:53 |
| 5 - 17 | Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 85 / B. 161 | 59:17 |

Stefan Veselka, Piano

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Booklet notes: Keith Anderson and Stefan Veselka • Publishers: Supraphon

A complete track listing can be found on page 4 of the booklet

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