

NAXOS

DVOŘÁK

Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra • Marin Alsop



Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8

Antonín Dvořák was born in 1841, the son of a butcher and innkeeper in the village of Nelahozeves, near Kralupy, in Bohemia, and some forty miles north of Prague. It was natural that he should 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, particularly with the success of his *Hymnus: Dědicové bílé hory* (The Heirs of the White Mountain) for the Prague Hlahol Vocal Society.

Further recognition came to Dvořák in 1874, when his application for an Austrian government award brought his music to the attention of Brahms and the critic Eduard Hanslick in Vienna. 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 the *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, an institution that 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. There were musical results in his own work, notably in his *Symphony 'From the New World'*, and chamber music of the period, 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.

Dvořák wrote his *Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70*, for the London Philharmonic Society, after his successful appearance in London in March 1884. He started work, it seems in December, and the symphony was completed by the middle of March 1865, to be performed in London on 22nd April at St James's Hall. Four years later Hans von Bülow conducted the symphony in Berlin so successfully that Dvořák decorated the autograph score with a portrait of the conductor, adding below the words 'Glory to you! You brought this work to life'. The work owes something to the impression on Dvořák of Brahms's *Symphony in F major* and that composer's remark that he supposed the new symphony would be quite different from the *Symphony in D major (No. 6)*.

The first movement of *Symphony No. 7* opens in a sombre mood, but even the first theme, played by violas and cellos, has the suggestion of Bohemian inspiration about it, although this is possibly the least obviously national of the five later symphonies of Dvořák and the influence of Brahms remains clear enough, particularly in the second subject, introduced by flute and clarinet. The second movement starts with a fine clarinet melody in F major, leading to a further melody for flutes and oboes that ventures into new harmonies. There is a new theme introduced by violin and cello, followed by the French horn, and the melodies we have heard are then developed. The following *Scherzo* is highly typical of the composer in its rhythms, its double theme preserving the darker mood of the whole symphony, while the trio breathes an air of country serenity. The final movement shows yet again Dvořák's considerable powers of invention. A first theme of great potential leads to a second emphatic melody, of which the woodwind have provided a foretaste, and a third theme in A major is introduced by the cellos. The movement contains much that seems replete with tragic foreboding, before the triumphant return of the key of D major with which the symphony ends.

In 1884 Dvořák had bought a small property at Vysoka and it was there that in the autumn of 1889 he

wrote his *Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88*, celebrating in the superscription to the score his admission as a member of the Emperor Franz Josef's Czech Academy of Science, Literature and the Arts. The first performance was in Prague in February 1890, followed by a performance in London under the composer's direction in April and in June in Cambridge, where he received an honorary doctorate. The symphony was published in London by Novello, strong supporters of Dvořák, whose Vienna publisher Simrock had proved readier to buy shorter pieces, for which there was always a ready market. A performance under Richter in Vienna had to wait until January 1891.

The symphony, scored for an orchestra that includes piccolo, cor anglais and tuba, in addition to pairs of other woodwind instruments, four horns, trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings, is imbued with the spirit of Bohemia. The first movement opens with a fine G minor theme for cellos, clarinets, bassoon and horn, followed by a cheerful interruption from the flute and a rhythmic additional theme played by divided violas and cellos. There is throughout the movement a mood that changes from major to minor, the former eventually predominating in a closing section. The slow movement brings a similar ambivalence, the three flats of the opening key signature apparently an afterthought for music which is now in E flat major, before reaching C minor, contradicted by the woodwind. The key signature is replaced before long by a happy C major melody for flute and oboe. The third movement is in the form of a graceful G minor waltz, with a contrasting trio section from Dvořák's opera *The Stubborn Lovers*. The trumpets introduce the finale, their strong opening bars followed by a gently lilting cello theme, the subject of a series of variations, interrupted by a more sinister element. There is a return to the lyrical principal theme of the movement before the excitement of the closing section, as the orchestra is urged on by the French horns at their brassiest.

Keith Anderson

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Photo: Dave Hoffmann



The Grammy Award-winning Baltimore Symphony Orchestra is internationally recognized as having achieved a preeminent place among the world's most important orchestras. Acclaimed for its uncompromising pursuit of artistic excellence, the BSO has attracted a devoted national and international following while maintaining deep bonds throughout the Maryland community through innovative education and community outreach initiatives.

The BSO made musical history in 2005 when it announced the appointment of Marin Alsop as its 12th music director, making her the first woman to lead a major American orchestra. Maestra Alsop's inaugural concerts in September 2007 marked the dawn of a new era for the BSO, as she brings her highly praised artistic vision, her dynamic musicianship, and her commitment to accessibility in classical music to BSO audiences throughout Maryland.

The BSO is actively involved in recording, broadcasting, and podcasting projects which make the BSO's music available to audiences around the globe. It has received critical acclaim for its prolific discography, which features renowned artists such as cellist Yo-Yo Ma, pianist Hélène Grimaud, and violinists Joshua Bell and Hilary Hahn. Under the direction of Maestra Marin Alsop, the BSO has recently released several recordings including a 2009 Grammy-nominated release of Bernstein's *Mass* on the Naxos label (8.559622-23).

In addition to the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, where the orchestra has performed for 27 years, the BSO is a founding partner and the resident orchestra at the new state-of-the-art Music Center at Strathmore, just outside Washington, D.C. With the opening of Strathmore in February 2005, the BSO became the nation's only major orchestra with year-round venues in two metropolitan areas.

Marin Alsop



Internationally acclaimed for her creative approach to programming and interpretation of repertoire from the mainstream to the contemporary, Marin Alsop is an inspirational music director, instilling orchestras with new dynamism and deepening their interaction with audiences and the wider community. She has enjoyed great success as music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and has retained strong links with all of her previous orchestras. From 2002-2008 she was principal conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and now holds the post of conductor emeritus, as well as being music director laureate of the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, where she was music director from 1993 to 2005. Since 1992 Alsop has been music director of California's Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, building a devoted audience for new music and playing to sold-out houses.

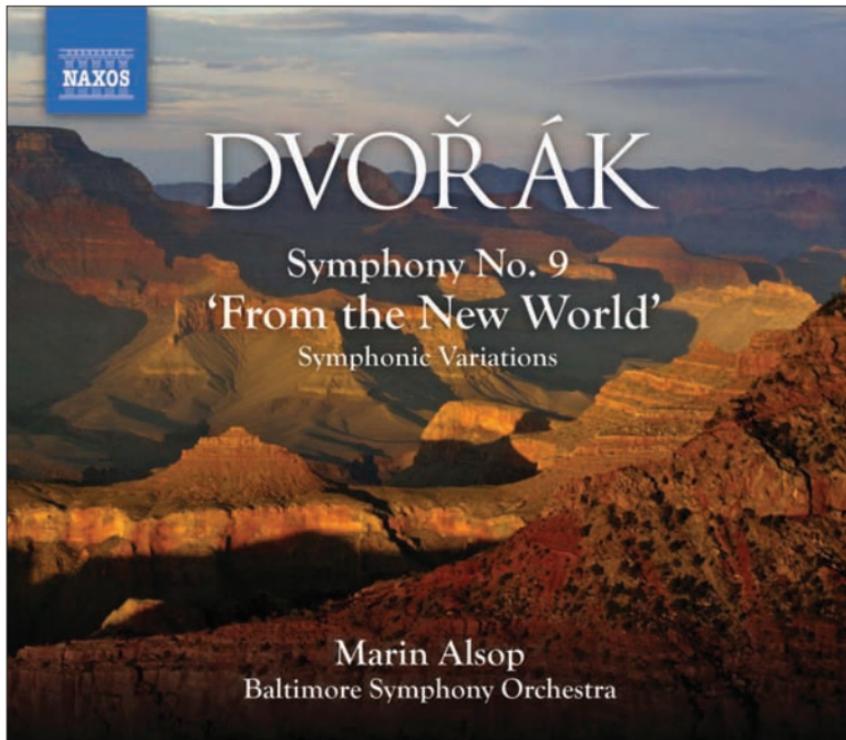
As a guest conductor, Marin Alsop makes regular appearances with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic. European engagements have taken her to the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Zurich Tonhalle, Orchestre de Paris, Munich Philharmonic and La Scala Milan. She is one of the few conductors to perform every season with both the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic. At London's Southbank Centre, she is the artistic director of The Bernstein Project which runs from September 2009 to July 2010, and which will range from Mozart with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment to Bernstein's own *Mass*, featuring musicians from the National Youth Orchestra and a huge cast of performers drawn from the local community.

Since beginning her position in Baltimore in September 2007, Alsop has spearheaded educational initiatives which reach more than 60,000 school and pre-school students, and in 2008 launched *OrchKids*, an after-school program designed to provide music education, instruments and mentorship to the city's neediest young people. Her ability to transcend traditional barriers was exemplified by her invitation to attend the 2006 annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos and by her delivery of a televised speech on the importance of arts education to the National Press Club in Washington D.C. in 2008. A regular presence in the media, she has been profiled in *Time* and *Newsweek*, appeared on NBC's *Today Show* and was featured as ABC News's 'Person of the Week.'

Musical America's 2009 Conductor of the Year, Marin Alsop made history in 2007 when she was appointed music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, thus becoming the first woman to head a major American orchestra. In 2003, she was the first artist to be named *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year and to receive the Royal Philharmonic Society's Conductor's Award in the same year, while in 2005, she became the first conductor to be conferred the USA's prestigious MacArthur Fellowship. Among her other prizes are a European Women of Achievement Award, a Classical BRIT Award for Best Female Artist and the Royal Philharmonic Society's BBC Radio 3 Listeners Award. In Autumn 2008, she became a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and her achievements at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music have been recognized annually with the ASCAP award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music.

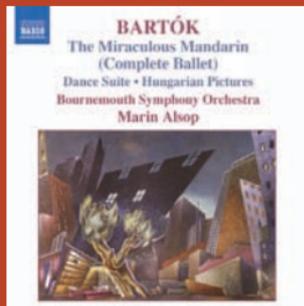
Her extensive discography includes the Brahms symphonies with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, music by Bartók, Bernstein, Takemitsu, Weill and Orff with the Bournemouth Symphony, in addition to a series featuring American composers. A mainstay of the Naxos recording label, in 2008, Alsop launched a Dvořák symphony cycle with the Baltimore Symphony with the *Symphony No. 9, 'From the New World'*, which immediately became an international best seller, as well as a Grammy-nominated release of Bernstein's *Mass* in 2009. Born in New York City, Marin Alsop attended Yale University and received her master's degree from The Juilliard School. Marin Alsop was the first woman to be awarded the Koussevitsky Conducting Prize from the Tanglewood Music Center where she became a protégée of Leonard Bernstein.

Also available:

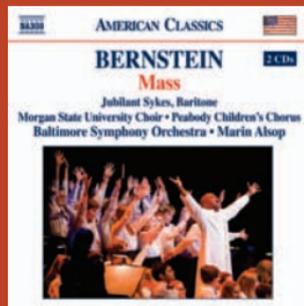


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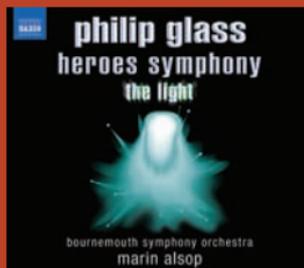
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"It is rare to be able to say that a performance forces one to listen to a work anew, but this is exactly what Alsop's reading achieves. Excellently recorded... this is a superb issue all round" (*BBC Music Magazine* on Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, 8.570714).

In these live recordings from Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore, Dvořák's most darkly dramatic and passionate symphony, the *Seventh*, is coupled with his *Eighth*, notable for its dramatic contrasts, Bohemian lyricism, and a seemingly spontaneous flow of thematic ideas.

Antonín
DVOŘÁK
(1841-1904)

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	Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70	37:04
1	Allegro maestoso	10:14
2	Poco adagio	10:08
3	Scherzo: Vivace – Poco meno mosso	7:40
4	Finale: Allegro	9:01
	Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88	37:17
5	Allegro con brio	10:24
6	Adagio	10:54
7	Allegretto grazioso – Molto vivace	6:14
8	Allegro, ma non troppo	9:45

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra • Marin Alsop

Recorded live at Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Baltimore, USA,
from 10th to 13th January, 2008 (tracks 5-7), and from 19th to 22nd March, 2009 (tracks 1-4)

Producer: Steve Epstein • Engineer: Richard King • Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

Cover photograph of Prague by Waiheng Chow (Dreamstime.com)



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Playing Time
74:21



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Made in Germany

Booklet notes in English

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