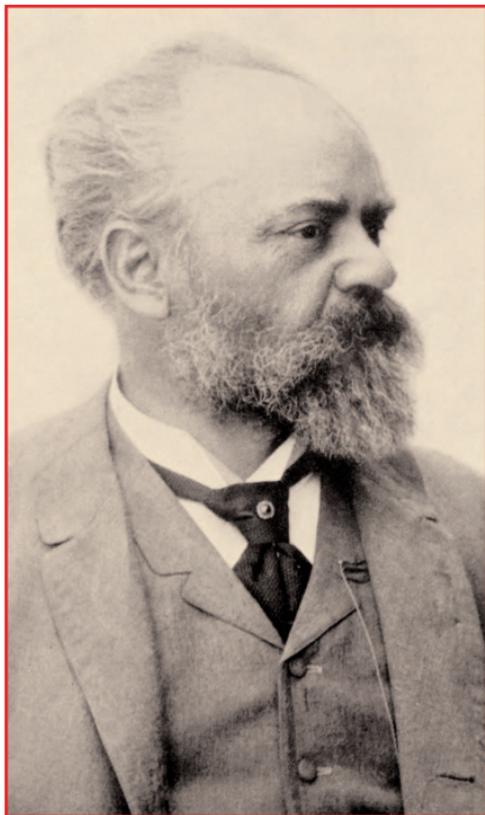




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**Antonín
DVOŘÁK**

**Complete Solo
Piano Music**

Suite in A

Scottish Dances

Stefan Veselka

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) Complete Solo Piano Music, Volume 5

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 Sonatina*, 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 *Polka, B. 3*, seems to be Dvořák's earliest surviving piano piece, probably written in 1860 after a visit to the Zlonice Fair, the mood of which is reflected in the mood of the piece.

The *Scottish Dances, Op. 41, B. 74*, were written in 1877. These consist of short eight-bar sections strung together into a single dance. They are fiery and energetic in character. The keyboard-orientation is not so well suited to the piano, nor is it fully mature, suggesting that it was probably an occasional composition.

The *Humoresque in F sharp major, B. 138*, is a little miniature that was written for the publishing house Urbanek of Prague in 1884. It is a cheerful piece, which prefers the piano's high register.

Dvořák's *Impromptu in D minor, B. 129*, was an occasional composition for the magazine *Humoristické Listy* and was composed together with the *Piano Trio in F minor, Op. 65*, in 1883. It resembles Dvořák's *Dunkas* and was written shortly after the death of his

mother, perhaps reflecting the pain of his loss in its moving middle section. The musical style leads naturally to a rubato performance apparent from the notation.

The *Suite in A major, Op. 98, B. 184*, was begun on New Year's Day 1894 in New York, a few weeks after the première of *Symphony No. 9*, "From the New World". He completed it in late February and early March. The suite form allowed Dvořák many artistic liberties. He could join the five movements in one work, although each has a completely different expression. The whole work is held together only by the initial theme, which returns at the end of the fifth piece. A year later Dvořák modified the suite for orchestra as well. The resulting *American Suite* became a popular and frequently performed work.

The two piano pieces *Lullaby - Capriccio, B. 188, Op. posth.* of 1894 are Dvořák's last works for solo piano. Originally they were thought to be part of a suite. The *Lullaby* is a quiet, tender piece with a lively middle section. The *Capriccio* is a funny piece with a playful, high-spirited middle section which is almost reminiscent of a fairground atmosphere.

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 Luxembourg, 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 5

1 Polka in E major, B. 3: Tempo di polka	1:57
2 Scottish Dances, Op. 41 / B. 74: Vivace in D minor	5:38
3 Humoresque, B. 138: Vivace in F sharp major	2:17
4 Impromptu, B. 129: Allegro scherzando in D minor	4:44
Suite in A major, Op. 98 / B. 184	17:55
5 1. Moderato	4:33
6 2. Molto vivace	3:22
7 3. Allegretto	4:03
8 4. Andante	3:21
9 5. Allegro	2:36
Two Pieces, Op. posth. / B. 188	5:57
10 1. Lullaby: Molto moderato in G major	3:16
11 2. Capriccio: Allegretto scherzando in G minor	2:42

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 final disc of Dvořák's Complete Published Solo Piano Music features the *Suite, Op. 98*, begun a few weeks after the première of the *New World Symphony* and subsequently revised and orchestrated as the *American Suite*, one of Dvořák's most popular and frequently performed works.

DeutschlandRadio

Antonín
DVOŘÁK
(1841-1904)

Complete Published Solo Piano Music • 5

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|----------------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Polka in E major, B. 3 | 1:57 |
| 2 | Scottish Dances, Op. 41 / B. 74 | 5:38 |
| 3 | Humoresque, B. 138 | 2:17 |
| 4 | Impromptu, B. 129 | 4:44 |
| 5 - 9 | Suite in A 'American', Op. 98 / B. 184 | 17:55 |
| 10 - 11 | Two Pieces, Op. posth. / B. 188 | 5:57 |

Stefan Veselka, Piano

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

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