

NAXOS

Ernő
DOHNÁNYI

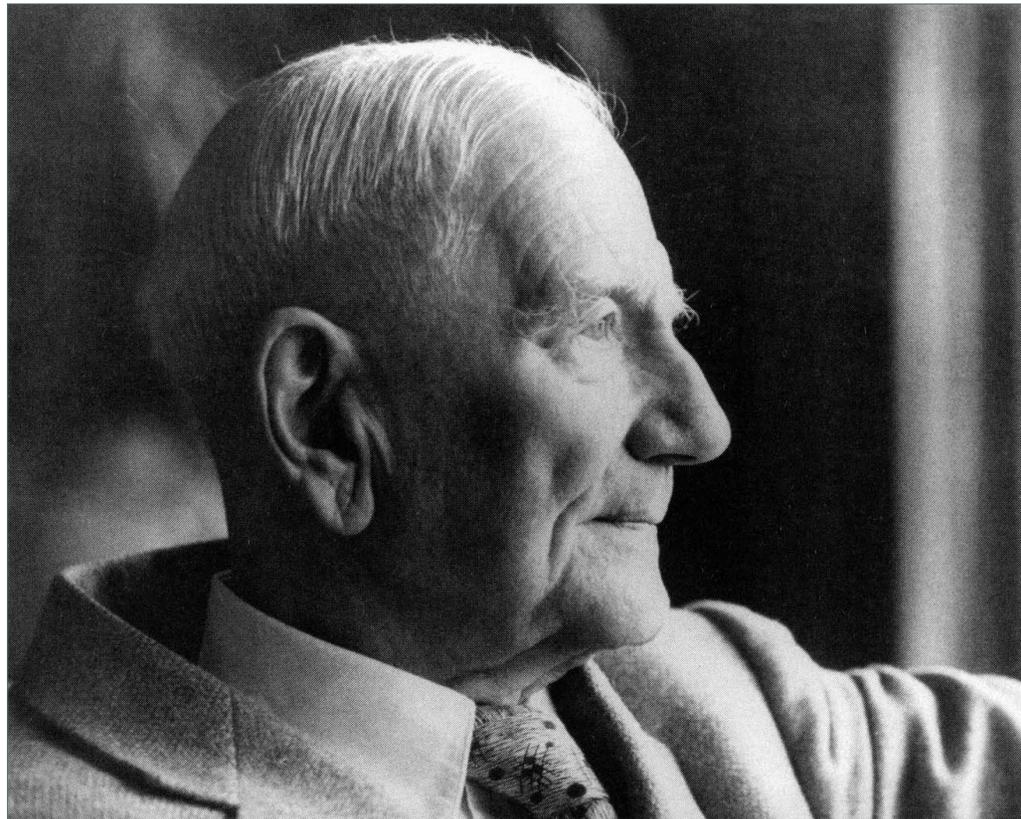
Symphony No. 2

Two Songs

Evan Thomas Jones, Baritone

Florida State University Symphony Orchestra

Alexander Jiménez



Ernő Dohnányi (1877-1960)

Symphony No. 2 in E major, Op. 40 • Two Songs, Op. 22, Nos. 1 and 2

Ernő Dohnányi was born in 1877 in Poszony (the modern Slovakian capital, Bratislava). His father, an amateur musician, taught in Poszony at the Catholic Gymnasium, where Bartók's widowed mother was to be employed and where Dohnányi and Bartók were both pupils. Four years the latter's senior, Dohnányi had organ lessons and instruction in music theory from Karl Forstner, organist at the Catholic cathedral, and began to enjoy early and precocious success. In 1894, rather than study in Vienna, as might have been expected, he chose instead to become a student at the Budapest Music Academy (now the Franz Liszt Academy). There he was a piano pupil of István Thomán, a former pupil of Liszt and principal piano teacher at the Academy, where his composition teacher was the German composer Hans Koessler, a cousin of Max Reger and admirer of Brahms. Bartók was to study under the same teachers, but Dohnányi, while sharing Bartók's later prowess as a pianist, was more strongly influenced by the German school of composition.

In 1897 Dohnányi prepared for his début as a pianist in Berlin by brief study with Eugen d'Albert. He went on to give concerts in Germany and Austria, with an invitation to London from Hans Richter and a triumphant performance of Beethoven's *Fourth Piano Concerto*. Thereafter he embarked on concert tours throughout Europe, in Russia and in the United States, establishing himself as a virtuoso to equal Liszt. In 1905 he was invited by Joachim to join the staff of the Berlin Musikhochschule, where he taught until 1915, when, with the Great War now under way, he returned to Hungary, teaching at the Liszt Academy, giving encouragement to a younger generation of Hungarian composers, and doing much to reform systems of musical instruction in the country. In 1919 he became President and Director of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra, a position he would hold until 1944. He was also appointed Director of the Liszt Academy, but was dismissed just a few months later by a new political regime.

Dohnányi's career as a conductor and pianist

continued in Hungary and abroad, particularly in the United States, where, in 1925, he served as Principal Conductor of the New York State Symphony Orchestra. In 1928 he returned to the Liszt Academy, of which he was to become director, for a second time, from 1934 until his resignation, for political reasons, in 1943. In 1931 he was appointed Music Director of Hungarian Radio. After his resignation in 1944 Dohnányi moved to Austria, a step that brought later criticism from his opponents and affected his post-war concert career. While he had been strongly against the antisemitic policies introduced into Hungary through German intervention, he had no sympathy with the left-wing forces that were to come to power in Hungary after the war. In 1948 he moved to England and then to Argentina, and finally to the United States, where, from 1949, he was composer-in-residence at Florida State University. He died in New York in 1960 during a recording session, at a time when his reputation was starting to recover from the political attacks that had been made on him in the aftermath of the war.

Keith Anderson

Symphony No. 2 in E major, Op. 40

The composition of Ernő Dohnányi's *Second Symphony* coincided with his departure from war-torn Hungary during World War II. Dohnányi finished the first movement in July 1944 in a village just northeast of Budapest, where he was seeking refuge from the air raids that were pummeling the city. He completed the fourth movement that October, after briefly returning to Budapest to find transportation out of the country. The second and third movements were composed in Vienna in the spring of 1945, during which time the city was bombed almost daily. Dohnányi spent that summer editing the entire work in the peaceful Austrian mountain hamlet of Neukirchen-am-Walde. The emended manuscript is now in the Dohnányi Collection at Florida State University.

The symphony is a colossal work, lasting around an hour and calling for an extraordinarily large orchestra. Although it is tempting to attribute the symphony's monumentality to its wartime genesis, the composition is actually a profound response to twentieth-century music. Dohnányi championed the passionate and grandiose Romantic style that had been popular during the nineteenth century, as typified by the works of his mentor Johannes Brahms. While the vast majority of his contemporaries had abandoned that style in favor of more avant-garde approaches, Dohnányi felt that such departures from longstanding musical values symbolized the irreversible collapse of Western culture that Oswald Spengler had described in *The Decline of the West*.

Dohnányi was also convinced that by rejecting traditional forms and genres in their quests for new methods of expression, modernist composers had forsaken artistic effort in favor of superficial novelty. This was a concept that was completely at odds with his personal philosophy, which was inspired by Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*. Madách's text, an epic poem generally considered to be the Hungarian *Faust*, asserts that struggles form the very core of Man's existence. For Dohnányi, it was within these struggles that one could find not just meaning, but joy. On the eve of his eightieth birthday, he even attributed his seemingly endless virility to this philosophy. "Life is a struggle, and you have to love that struggle if you love life," Dohnányi said. "That keeps you young."

Madách's philosophies resonate throughout the symphony. Dohnányi summarized the essence of the entire composition with two lines from *The Tragedy of Man*: "The goal is the end of the glorious fight. The goal is death; *life is a struggle*." He also quoted specific passages from the epic poem to explain the ideas behind the symphony's individual movements.

The first movement is in sonata form, a time-honored dramatic plot that is often thought of as a conflict between two themes. In the opening section (the Exposition) the first theme is presented in the key of the symphony, and the second theme appears in a contrasting key. In the middle section (the Development) segments of the two

themes are placed in opposition to each other to create melodic and harmonic instability. Finally, in the closing section (the Recapitulation) the two themes are again presented in their entirety, but this time the second theme is resolved into the key of the symphony. Because the second theme returns in the key originally associated with the first theme, the first theme is said to have prevailed. In the opening movement to his *Second Symphony*, Dohnányi used the struggle inherent in sonata form to represent Madách's question, "what is life worth without love and strife?" This strife is represented by an intensely angular theme that heroically battles it out with a militaristic subject before finally emerging victorious in the recapitulation.

Dohnányi intended the second movement to represent Eve in the Garden of Eden, who in *The Tragedy of Man* says, "How sweet, how beautiful to live." Not surprisingly, the movement is subdued and pastoral, providing a peaceful contrast to the aggressive struggle of the first movement. For the third movement, a playful march labeled *Burla* (Mockery), Dohnányi did not provide a quotation from Madách, but simply explained that it is "the opposite of the 2nd." The brief movement provides an excellent example of how Dohnányi infused his sardonic sense of humor into even the most profound of works. Full of mocking dissonances and sarcastic outbursts, the movement almost seems to stick out its tongue at its audience.

The fourth movement returns to the profundity of the first movement. It begins with a quotation of J. S. Bach's *Come, Sweet Death*, followed by five distinct variations on that theme. Dohnányi was quick to point out that despite the title of Bach's work, "the movement has nothing to do with actual death. The words of the chorale tell only of the longing for death of the tired man. The variations alternate between this feeling and the desire to live, which finally wins out at the end." The variations give way to a triple fugue, a highly complex overlapping of contrapuntal voices that is demonstrative of Dohnányi's brilliant compositional style. A coda serves as a culmination of the entire symphony by bringing back the conquering theme from the first movement. Dohnányi intended this triumphant ending to represent "Life's victory over Death!"

Dohnányi's protégé Edward Kilenyi recalled that when he visited Dohnányi in Neukirchen, the maestro showed him the manuscript and proclaimed, "This is the last symphony". By this, Dohnányi meant that the work represented not only his own final symphony, but the culminating work in a dying genre. Dohnányi was very much aware that he was one of the last composers in the Romantic tradition, and, just as Bach's late works are among the last and most thoroughly developed compositions in the Baroque style, Dohnányi's *Second Symphony* represents a paradigmatic monument to Romanticism.

The symphony had its première in London on 23rd November, 1948, in a performance that was largely panned in the British press. Dohnányi himself later admitted that he had never been fully satisfied with the symphony. After arriving in Florida, he made extensive revisions to the work, including trimming it down from over an hour to around fifty minutes. The reworked version was given its première on 15th March, 1957 by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dohnányi's nephew Antal Doráti. After Dohnányi made a few final edits, Doráti programmed the work again on 15th November of the same year, to great critical acclaim. It is this final version that is presented on this disc.

Two Songs for baritone and orchestra, Op. 22

Dohnányi composed two songs for baritone voice and orchestra in 1912, labeling the works *Op. 22, Nos. 1 and 2*. The texts, *Gott* and *Sonnensehnsucht*, are by Wilhelm Conrad Gomoll (1877-1951), whose poetry Dohnányi had set earlier in a cycle of six songs for voice and piano titled *Im Lebenslenz, Op. 16* (1907), as well as in a self-standing *Lied* titled *Am Bach* (1912). Although there is evidence that suggests that Dohnányi intended to compose additional orchestral songs to comprise a lengthier cycle, he never did so. He did, however, compose a setting of Gomoll's *Melodien* for soprano and orchestra – a work that received neither an opus number nor a première.

Gott chronicles the eternal existence of a pantheistic God. The first two lines of text are set to a motive that

combines a rise in pitch with both a thickening of the instrumentation and an increase in volume, a process that is quickly reversed to mark the end of the phrase. This motive is performed six times to punctuate each pair of lines in the first three stanzas of Gomoll's original poem before reaching a climax on the word "Gott" – the first time God's name is invoked in the text. It is in the first half of the final stanza that Gomoll fully reveals God's presence in all of creation. Dohnányi marked this change in poetry with a corresponding shift in texture to hymn-like chords in the brass before returning to the rising and falling motive to complete the setting.

The text of *Sonnensehnsucht* depicts a sinister darkness that is overcome only by the break of dawn. Dohnányi introduces this gloomy text with an ominous introduction that features angular melodies and dissonant harmonies. Unlike the repeated phrases in *Gott*, *Sonnensehnsucht* continually introduces new musical material as the text unfolds. After the conclusion of the lengthy first stanza, the brooding introduction returns as an interlude. At first, it appears as if the music from the first stanza is going to be repeated in its entirety, but the mood dramatically changes halfway through. Menacing dissonance is replaced by heroic fanfares in major keys that symbolize the triumphant rising of the sun.

In the summer of 1912, while visiting the famous violinist Bronislaw Huberman, Dohnányi played both songs on the piano for Huberman's wife, the actress Elza Galafrés. Although Dohnányi was still married to his first wife, he had become attracted to Galafrés. The two songs provided an opportunity for him to forge a deep connection to the woman who would eventually become his second wife. "His hands moved softly over the keyboard as if in improvisation, while from his lips came softly the words of a poem *Sonnensehnsucht* by Wilhelm C. Gomoll. He finished and I could not move", Galafrés later recalled. "Without speaking he began another song, *Gott*, by the same poet. The songs were full of his longing; they were cries from his heart. I tried to hide my tears."

Gott received its public première in Berlin on 17th February, 1914. The programme began with Dohnányi performing Brahms's *Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat major*,

and continued with the world premières of three of Dohnányi's compositions, *Gott; Suite in Olden Style, Op. 24*, for solo piano, and *Variations on a Nursery Song, Op. 25*, for piano and orchestra. The Dutch baritone Johannes Meschaert was supposed to sing *Gott*, but fell ill and was unsuccessfully replaced by a seven-member bass choir singing in unison. "The experiment was a failure", wrote Galafrés. "The choir could not express the power and poignancy of the single voice, and the whole thing sounded tedious."

After moving to Hungary during World War I, Dohnányi returned to *Gott* by programming it on a 8th November, 1920 concert of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra that also included the public première of *Sonnensehnsucht*. The performance, which featured Dohnányi as the conductor and the operatic bass-baritone Richard Mayr as the soloist, redeemed the ill-fated Berlin première. Béla Bartók was present that night and described the composition as "powerful and profoundly poetic."

Despite the success of the Budapest performance, *Gott* and *Sonnensehnsucht* disappeared from the repertoire. The Berlin-based music publisher Simrock purchased the rights to publish the orchestral songs, but never did so. Even the composer seems to have all but forgotten about them. Dohnányi – who often claimed that his favourite compositions were whatever he had completed most recently – simply moved on to other projects.

In 1951, however, Dohnányi asked his beloved sister Mitzi to send him the orchestral songs. After leaving Hungary in 1944, he had landed in the United States in 1949, deep in debt from a five-year odyssey that had ended only when he accepted a professorship at Florida State University. In a letter that is now in the FSU Dohnányi Collection, he asked Mitzi – who had remained behind in Budapest – to locate the manuscripts to some of his unpublished works, presumably in the hopes of getting them published (a plan that he apparently later abandoned). This included *Gott* and *Sonnensehnsucht*, which Mitzi copied out by hand and sent to him. Dohnányi's original manuscripts are now in the National

Széchenyi Library in Budapest, while Mitzi's copies are at FSU. It was Mitzi's copies that inspired Alex Jiménez and me to revive the orchestral songs with the Florida State University Symphony Orchestra in 2013.

James A. Grymes



Dohnányi scholar James A. Grymes is the author of *Ernst von Dohnányi: A Bio-Bibliography* (Greenwood Press, 2001) and the editor of *Ernst von Dohnányi: A Song of Life* (Indiana University Press, 2002) and *Perspectives on Ernst von Dohnányi* (Scarecrow Press, 2005). He has created editions of Dohnányi's music that have been performed and recorded all over the world, including the symphonic cantata *Cantus vitae*, an early string sextet, and the orchestral songs presented on this recording. These editions are based on manuscripts in the Ernst von Dohnányi Collection at Florida State University, which Dr Grymes established in 1997. Dr Grymes is Professor of Musicology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education from Virginia Commonwealth University, as well as Master of Music degrees in Musicology and Bassoon Performance, a Certificate in Early Music, and a Ph.D. in Musicology from Florida State University.

Evan Thomas Jones



Originally from Buffalo, New York, baritone Evan Thomas Jones has sung a wide variety of rôles in opera, most notably both Mozart and Rossini's *Figaro*, as well as Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*. He has undertaken a number of rôles in musical theatre and operetta, including those of Danilo Danilovich in *The Merry Widow*, Fredrik Egerman in *A Little Night Music* and Leon Czolgosz in *Assassins*. In concert he has been featured as the baritone soloist in Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, and Bach's *Magnificat*. He is particularly in demand as an interpreter of the concert repertoire of Ralph Vaughan Williams, having performed the *Five Mystical Songs*, *Serenade to Music*, *Dona Nobis Pacem* and the *Fantasia On Christmas Carols*. He has sung with Opera Memphis, Opera Naples, Berkshire Opera Company, Compañía Lírica Nacional de Costa Rica, Mercury Opera, the Rochester and Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestras, Finger Lakes Choral Festival and the Augusta Choral Society.

Florida State University College of Music University Orchestras



The Florida State University Orchestras have enjoyed a long and illustrious history. The Florida State College Orchestra was formed in 1925 by violin professor Ethel Maud and in 1947, with the change from a college for women to a co-educational university, the College Orchestra became known as the University Symphony under the leadership of Robert Sedore. In 1949, Karl Kuersteiner formed the State Symphony of Florida, the predecessor of the FSU Chamber Orchestra. From 1967 until 1971 the Chamber Orchestra was led by former Boston Symphony Orchestra associate conductor, Richard Burgin. In 1972 Phillip Spurgeon assumed the post of Director of Orchestral Activities. During his tenure, FSU's orchestral program saw dramatic growth artistically and in scope. In 2000, the University Philharmonia was created under the direction of Alexander Jiménez and since 2004 Jiménez has served as director of orchestral activities conducting both the University Philharmonia and the University Symphony Orchestra, as well as leading the graduate orchestral conducting program. The University Symphony Orchestra has made numerous recordings on the Koch, Mark, and Naxos labels. Ernő Dohnányi gave his final public performance conducting the University Symphony Orchestra in Tallahassee on 30th January, 1960.

Alexander Jiménez



A conductor and pedagogue, Alexander Jiménez serves as professor of conducting and director of orchestral studies at the Florida State University College of Music, one of the leading music programs in the United States. Under his direction the University Orchestras have become recognized among the most important orchestral training programs in the U.S. A dynamic and versatile podium presence, Jiménez has appeared with orchestras throughout the United States and in Europe, including engagements in Belgium, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Italy. He has recorded on the Mark, Neos, Col Legno, BBC/Ovation, and Naxos labels. A highly-respected educator, Jiménez is in demand as a guest conductor, teacher, and adjudicator with youth orchestras and adjudication panels throughout the United States and Europe. Since 2009 he has served on the international jury panel of the European Festival of Music for Young People in Neerpelt, Belgium, and in 2013 was named International Festival Ambassador. From 2010-2012 he served as president of the College Orchestra Directors Association and since 2000 he has served as music director of the Tallahassee Youth Orchestras. Jiménez is the recipient of a Florida State University Teaching Award and has been nominated for the Distinguished Teaching Award.

Dohnányi's powerful *Second Symphony* was composed toward the end of the Second World War but its large canvas reflects not so much his wartime experience as his own artistic credo as a Romantic composer. Of the symphony and its philosophy he wrote: "The goal is the end of the glorious fight. The goal is death; life is a struggle", and in it he crafted a passionate monument to the Romanticism he espoused, heard here in its final revised version. The two songs for baritone and orchestra have been very rarely heard, and were revived by Alexander Jiménez with the Florida State University Symphony Orchestra in 2013.

Ernő
DOHNÁNYI
(1877-1960)

Symphony No. 2 in E major, Op. 40 (1945, rev. 1957)	54:49
① I. Allegro con brio, ma energico e appassionato	14:07
② II. Adagio pastorale, molto con sentimento	13:47
③ III. Burla: Allegro	4:32
④ IV. Introduzione, variazione con fuga sopra un corale di J.S. Bach, e coda	22:23
Two Songs, Op. 22 (1912)*	10:55
Texts by Wilhelm Conrad Gomoll (1877-1951)	
⑤ No. 1. Gott (God)	4:43
⑥ No. 2. Sonnensehnsucht (Longing for the Sun)	6:13

***WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

Evan Thomas Jones, Baritone*

Florida State University Symphony Orchestra
Alexander Jiménez

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