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LIVING STEREO



ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95
"From the New World"

- 1 Adagio; Allegro molto 8:47
- 2 Largo 12:27
- 3 Scherzo: Molto vivace 7:33
- 4 Allegro con fuoco 10:28
(Recorded November 9, 1957)

- 5 **Carnival Overture, Op. 92*** 8:53
(Recorded January 7, 1956)



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BEDŘICH SMETANA (1824–1884)

- 6 **The Bartered Bride: Overture*** 6:32
(Recorded December 12, 1955)

JAROMÍR WEINBERGER (1896–1967)

- 7 **Schwanda: Polka and Fugue*** 9:18
(Recorded January 7, 1956)

Chicago Symphony Orchestra**Fritz Reiner**, conductor*(Recorded Orchestra Hall, Chicago)*

Produced by Richard Mohr

Recording Engineer: Lewis Layton

Mastering Engineer: Mark Donahue

DSD Engineer: Dirk Sobotka

Remastering Supervisor: John Newton

Reissue Producer: Daniel Guss

Series Coordination: Tim Schumacher

Editorial Supervision: Elizabeth A. Wright

Design: Red Herring Design

Photography: Sara Foldenauer

These were original three-track and *two-track recordings; in SACD multi-channel mode, the music will be heard only from the front left, center and right channels (three-track) and the front left and right channels (two-track).

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NOTES BY IRVING KOLODIN (1958)

A acquaintance with Dvořák's total output suggests that he would have written a work very much like the E Minor Symphony whether or not he had spent the years of 1892–94 (and another, briefer period overlapping 1894–95) on his famous visits to America. The degree to which it might have differed would relate to two things: the particular mood of nostalgia and homesickness for his native land which afflicted Dvořák during much of the time he spent in New York, and the musical elements related to American folk music which give the score its particular coloration.

For this listener, the first factor is decidedly more important than the second. That is to say, assuming that other composers' minds functioned like Ravel's (who once replied to a query about how a work was going, that it was very well along, save for the themes), the impulse to express a given kind of emotion pre-

ceded the creation of the material by which it was expressed, rather than—as is commonly supposed—vice versa. A connoisseur of folk art such as Dvořák (his *Slavonic Dances*, *Slavonic Rhapsodies*, "Dumka" Trio, etc., are eloquent testimony to this) doubtless relished the rich new vein of color he discovered in such Negro spirituals as *Swing Low*, *Sweet Chariot* and *Nobody Knows de Trouble I've Seen*, but what he absorbed from them were, like an author who bases a play on real people, only the elements of character.

I. Adagio; Allegro molto. Some general remarks on the large lines of the symphony might usefully precede a closer comment on its details. Each of the movements is preceded by an introduction, a matter of sufficient rarity to merit mention. A close connection among them is established not only by kinship of feeling, style and instrumentation, but also by cumulative reference to preced-

ing matter. Thus in both the second and third movements, dramatic use is made of the strong chordal theme which begins the allegro of the first movement, and which seems to stand in Dvořák's mind as symbolic of the "New World." In the finale, elements from each of the preceding movements are marshaled for its great climax.

The brooding introduction might be a long reflective look across the sea before the imperative of reality recalls the composer to where he is. The significance of the noble horn theme which begins the Allegro molto has been mentioned. Its little counterpoint is full of character, aptly utilized as the movement unfolds. The common description of the flute solo (introduced at measure 149) as a borrowing from *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* requires an addenda distinguishing between a tune and a theme. What Dvořák utilized unquestionably parallels

part of that fine tune, but in discarding the notes to which the words "Swing low, sweet" are sung and concentrating on "chariot, comin' to carry me home" (the rest is pure Dvořák), he shows the cultivated composer's sense of discrimination in seeking out a germinal phrase which can be elaborated. The important part it plays in the development shows how well he chose his materials.

II. Largo. So much has been written about the self-apparent beauties of this movement that more can be spared as superfluous. It may be mentioned, however, that the solemn chords at the beginning are not without a counterpart in *Smetana's Bartered Bride Overture* (of many years before), and that the yearning, luxuriant melodic line of the English horn solo—which one of Dvořák's pupils, William Arms Fisher, later transformed into a pseudo-spiritual titled *Goin' Home*, thus endlessly confusing all who

don't know which came first—is in a folk vein common to many things, including the "mountain song" on which d'Indy constructed his symphony for piano and orchestra. The motto theme erupts in a blaze of color before the final appearance of the English horn solo.

III. Scherzo: Molto vivace. One of the most interesting movements in the symphony, the scherzo has gotten along (well enough, to be sure) with the least comment. It is, for one thing, a superb example of a classical scherzo with two trios, and an involved pattern of repetitions that make it almost a rondo. For another, its materials are decidedly Czech—for example, the dance rhythm of the first trio. It strikes me as a clearly nostalgic evocation of home scenes and pastoral pleasures (as in the second, C major trio). This is especially so if one accepts my view of the "motto" theme as symbolizing, for Dvořák, the "New

World" itself. For when it breaks into the idyllic scene he has conjured up for himself (over an angry tremolando), it is almost as a bell tolling him back to "where he is." This is subtly underscored by the harmonic touch in which the trumpet is left hanging on a non-rejoicing minor chord (E) rather than being given the grace of the expected major.

IV. Allegro con fuoco. If the finale possesses a scheme related to the preceding suggestions, it would seem to be a reconciliation of all the previous elements, musical, personal and dramatic, into an integrated whole. And with the aid of some intensifying string writing related to the *Tannhäuser Overture*, Dvořák accomplishes his objective in what is more a free fantasy on several themes than a conventional symphonic movement. As a sample of the varied suggestions the same musical phrase might have for persons of different backgrounds, the