

DELOS DIGITAL MASTER SERIES

DE 3011



DVORAK  
SERENADE OP.22  
NOTTURNO OP.40  
WALDESRUHE

(SILENT WOODS)

FOR CELLO & ORCHESTRA OP.68

DOUGLAS DAVIS  
CELLO



GERARD SCHWARZ, CONDUCTOR  
LOS ANGELES CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



DE 3011

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# DVOŘÁK

Serenade Op. 22, Waldesruhe, Notturmo

The Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra

Gerard Schwarz, conductor

## **Serenade in E, Op. 22**

① I Moderato (4:18)

② II Tempo di valse (6:13)

③ III Scherzo: Vivace (5:41)

④ IV Larghetto (5:34)

⑤ V Finale (5:41)

⑥ **Waldesruhe (Silent Woods) (5:48)**

Douglas Davis, cello

⑦ **Notturmo in B, Op. 40 (6:50)**

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Co-Producers: Marc Aubort, Joanna Nickrenz

Executive Producer: Amelia Haygood

Recording Engineer: Marc Aubort

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Davis, Jim Wolvington

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The year 1874 was a pivotal one in the history of Czech music, for it would mark the great turning point in the careers of Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884) and Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904), the two men in whose work Czech music would at last come of age. On October 20th, the proud, uncompromising Smetana finally yielded to the inevitable and resigned his position as principal conductor of Prague's Provisional Theatre. At the age of fifty, the composer of *The Bartered Bride* was now totally deaf. What had at first been diagnosed as an ear infection was in fact the first manifestation of the venereal disease that would also claim his sanity and, ultimately, his life. At about the same time that Smetana's world was falling apart, Dvořák's fortunes were about to take a turn for the better: in the fall of 1874, the young, largely untried composer — who for several seasons had played the viola in Smetana's orchestra — was anxiously awaiting word from the Ministry of Education and a decision on the Austrian State Stipendium he had applied for earlier in the year.

Dvořák saw that prize — established in 1863 to help “young, poor and talented painters, sculptors and musicians” in the Western half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire — as his best and possibly final hope of becoming a full-time composer. He had left the relative security of the Provisional Theatre Orchestra in the summer of 1871 to devote more of his time to composition and yet, after three difficult and frustrating years, it was obvious that the gamble had simply failed to pay off. Several of his works, most notably the cantata *Dedicové bílé hory*



(The Heirs of the White Mountain) and the E-flat major Symphony (premiered by Smetana on March 29th) had been enthusiastically received, but his salary as organist at St. Adalbert's Church was so wretchedly meager that he was forced to supplement it with private teaching, an activity which was becoming an increasing drain on his time and energy.

The report filed by the Minister of Education, a perceptive and compassionate man named Karl Stremayer, sheds some fascinating and rather pathetic light on Dvořák's reduced circumstances:

"Anton DWORÁK (sic) of Prague, 33 years old, music teacher, completely without means. (Dvořák was required to supply an official certificate which demonstrated that he was, in fact, impoverished.) He has submitted 15 compositions, among them symphonies and overtures for full orchestra which display an undoubted talent, but in a way which as yet remains formless and unbridled. This talent is shown in a much purer and more pleasing manner in Dvořák's pictures from the 'Dvur Kralové Manuscript', which display genuine and original gifts. The fact that Dvořák's choral and orchestral works have been performed frequently at big public concerts made a favorable impression. The applicant, who has never yet been able to acquire a piano of his own, deserves a grant to ease his straitened circumstances and free him from anxiety in his creative work."

judges or the heart-breaking revelation that here was a composer too poor to afford a piano, Dvořák was awarded the grant in February of the following year. The modest cash prize of 400 gulden — something between \$450 and \$500 today — still amounted to three times his annual income and literally could not have come at a more opportune moment: for Antonin Dvořák, a husband for a little over a year, was about to become a father for the second time.

Yet over and above the easing of his financial difficulties, the State Prize brought Dvořák his first official recognition as a composer and introduced his music to some extremely powerful men. That year, two of the judges for the music division were Eduard Hanslick, the vastly influential Viennese critic (and model for Sixtus Beckmesser in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*) and Johannes Brahms, who would quickly become one of Dvořák's most ardent and tireless champions. (Within three years, both men would be pressuring Brahms' publisher, Simrock, on Dvořák's behalf; and by the end of his life, Brahms had clearly come to think of Dvořák as his spiritual son and heir. "Look here, Dvořák," he would tell him after the Vienna premiere of the "New World" Symphony: "You have a lot of children to support and I have practically no one. If you need anything, my fortune is at your disposal.")

But the most immediate and dramatic effect of this sudden change in Dvořák's fortunes was an outburst of creative activity that would remain unique in his career until the 1890's and



that extraordinary series of musical postcards he would send home from America. Within the space of something less than five months, he would complete the G major String Quintet, the four Op. 20 *Moravian Duets*, the Piano Trio in B-flat, the D major Piano Quartet, his finest symphony to date (the F major), the sketches for a new five-act opera, *Vanda*, and the earliest of his works destined to occupy a permanent place in the standard repertoire, *The Serenade for Strings*.

**I**ncredibly enough, given its abundance of musical ideas and wealth of ornamental detail, the composition of the *Serenade* — from rough sketch to finished score — required no more than a dozen Spring days: from May 3rd to May 14th, 1875. It is the most extrovert and ebullient of all Dvořák's early works, a by-product of his newly-found self-confidence and a reflection of the happy marriage that was as yet unclouded by the early deaths of his first three children.

The first movement, *Moderato*, is dominated by one of Dvořák's most characteristic and happiest inspirations: the gentle, flowing melody heard first in the violins, then echoed by the 'cellos and basses, an idea which is developed almost entirely by simple sequential repetition. (The composer's fondness for sequences would mar many of his early symphonies: Dvořák, one of the classic late-bloomers among the great composers, had yet to discover that repetition is not a synonym for *development*, at least in symphonic terms.) After arriving at a second subject, a graceful dotted figure which moves amiably through the keys of G major and B major, the



first subject returns, more or less intact, but with some interesting variations in its surface details: the 'cellos, playing in their upper register, re-state the principal theme augmented by a major third, before the movement rounds itself off with a quiet little coda.

While the second movement, *Tempo di Valse*, may owe something to Chopin and his Waltz in C-sharp minor (the waltzes share the same key, as do their trios), Dvořák, here, projects an unmistakably Bohemian — not Polish — melancholy: the folk-like melancholy which would later pervade the *Allegretto grazioso* of the G major Symphony. The trio is cast in three sections: a lyrical episode of considerable poise and elegance, followed by an agitated central section, which in turn yields to an aggressive, vaguely military passage before the waltz itself finally returns.

The *Scherzo*, marked *vivace*, begins in the relatively distant key of F major with a scurrying figure which is a mirror-image of the voicing in the first movement: here, the 'cellos are being chased by the violins. A second, far less hectic subject now appears — also in the key of F — but the skittish principal theme quickly cuts it off and is in turn cut off by the arrival of the trio and the change of key to A major. (The unusual number of distantly related keys and their carefully considered interactions provide the *Serenade* with much of its emotional variety and a good deal of its unity as well. For instance, as the third movement's A major trio looks forward to the opening of the *Larghetto*, the central section of that movement — in C-sharp minor — looks backward to the *Tempo*



*di Valse*.) It is in the compressed restatement of the scherzo figure where Dvořák presents the most novel structural invention of the entire *Serenade*: just as the scherzo theme was quoted briefly during the trio, a poignant reminiscence of the trio (made all the more poignant by some diminished sevenths) now appears here, before the movement rushes to a close.

It is in the beautiful *Larghetto* that Dvořák begins to do what Dvořák always did best: exercising what was probably the most natural melodic gift to be heard in music since the death of Franz Schubert. The entire movement grows from a long, seemingly effortless sweep of unbroken lyricism lasting some twenty-five bars, developed, again, by the simplest of means. Following the capricious, strangely unsettling C-sharp minor episode, the great melody returns and, after undergoing some elegant, florid ornamentation, is allowed to fade quietly away.

The exuberant *Finale*, the most complex and surprising of all the five movements, is a resourceful adaptation of sonata-rondo form. The rondo theme, played as a canon in the extremely remote key of F-sharp minor, is followed by a second subject — in B minor — whose rhythmic tension may suggest a thinly veiled *Slavonic Dance*. The home key of E major is (finally!) established by yet another buoyant, dance-like figure, a swaggering little tune that would not be completely out of place in the background of an Errol Flynn movie. (As a matter of fact, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who greatly admired Dvořák's music, *would* write something strikingly similar for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*!) The *Larghetto* subject



now makes a sudden, unexpected appearance; and after the rondo undergoes the conventional recapitulation, Dvořák springs his final surprise by summoning the flowing E major melody of the *Moderato*, thus giving his wonderfully diverse *Serenade for Strings* its final note of unity. Wrenched at last into its proper key, the rondo returns for the final time to drive the coda to its spirited conclusion.

**T**he *Notturmo in B for String Orchestra*, one of the strangest and most original of all Dvořák's works, occupied the composer's attention for the better part of thirteen years. It first appeared in the E minor String Quartet of 1870, one of those innumerable early works that Dvořák would later discard and which would never be published during his lifetime. However, as he was not quite prepared to disown the Quartet's haunting *Andante*, he would later adapt it — by adding a part for the double bass — as one of the inner movements of the G major Quintet of 1875. Changing his mind yet again, he would remove it from the Quintet (although most modern performances retain the *Andante religioso* as the second movement) and in 1883 re-cast the *Notturmo* as an independent work for string orchestra.

In a sense, the *Notturmo* is Dvořák's *Grosse Fuge*: a work that *must* be heard by itself because it simply does not fit with anything else. The reason becomes all too obvious after the unison four-bar introduction given to the 'cellos and basses. For the space of twenty-four bars, over a pedal F-sharp, Dvořák speaks in a language he had never spoken before and



would never speak again: not the language of the *Serenade* or the G major Quintet or even *Rusalka* or the "New World" Symphony, but the dark, mysterious, radically new harmonic language of *Tristan und Isolde*. The spell cast by this most sustained of all Dvořák's early Wagnerian experiments is not broken until the twenty-ninth bar, when the bass line is at last bumped from the hypnotic F-sharp pedal and the *Notturmo* is allowed to resolve itself by far more conventional means. It remains his closest brush with 19th century music's lunatic fringe; a fascinating experiment, but nothing more. For even in 1870, when he was first discovering Wagner's heady, dangerous potion, it was clear that Dvořák's sympathies and allegiance lay elsewhere.

**L**ike the *Notturmo*, the Adagio for 'Cello and Orchestra, *Silent Woods*, was an adaptation of an earlier work. At the beginning of 1892, Dvořák, in the company of the violinist Ferdinand Lachner and the 'cellist Hanus Wihan, set off on an extended concert tour of Bohemia and Moravia: a "farewell" tour of sorts, as Dvořák was shortly to assume his new duties as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. The recently completed *Dumky* Trio was the principal work heard on the recitals; but as each of his colleagues was expected to be heard individually and since there was nothing suitable for Wihan — Lachner could play the *Mazurek*, Op. 49 and the Op. 75 *Romantic Pieces* — Dvořák took four days from his Christmas holiday and produced the *Rondo in G minor* together with two arrange-



ments: the G minor *Slavonic Dance* and the piece called “Silent Woods” — an imaginative translation of the original “Klid,” meaning peace or calm — from the piano duet, *From the Bohemian Forest*. (Ze Sumavy).

What is so miraculous in this tiny masterpiece — apart from the melodic wonders contained within its simple three-part form — is the extent to which the arrangement improves upon the original by sounding so utterly, magically right for *that* particular instrument. Dvořák had written nothing for the ‘cello since 1865, the year of that ill-fated A major Concerto which he had not even bothered to orchestrate. Yet it was his delight in this happy little accident and his admiration for Wihan’s playing that would cause him to seriously consider writing for the instrument again: a revival of interest that would lead, within two years, to that other Dvořák *Cello Concerto* — the greatest such work in the literature.

The orchestral version of *Silent Woods* dates from 1893.

Jim Svejda  
KUSC, Los Angeles

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

For this recording we used two Schoeps 221B omni-directional microphones in a basic stereo placement to achieve a recording of optimum clarity and natural balance. The orchestra was positioned left to right of the conductor: first violins, violas, celli, second violins, and bass behind celli.

The hall we selected for this recording has a good music-making ambience: a large, warm, not echoing room with height, irregular surfaces and lots of wood. With our engineering we tried to recreate this ambience for the listener.

Our Studer Model 169 Stereo Mixer, was fed directly into the Digital Tape Recorder. The portable Studer console is battery-powered. There is no AC and therefore no chance of hum. The power supply for the Studer 169 console is a sophisticated battery charger.

Once the balance and the dynamic level (gain) were set at the beginning of the first session they were not changed throughout the recording. With digital recording there is no need to increase signal level during quiet passages. Such gain-riding and/or use of peak limiter is unnecessary and highly undesirable for audiophile recordings.





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P.O. Box 343, Sonoma, California 95476-9998  
(800) 364-0645 • (707) 996-3844  
*contactus@delosmusic.com • www.delosmusic.com*  
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