

7

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK Musician and Craftsman

John Clapham

I

Biographical Sketch

Antonín Dvořák came of sturdy peasant stock. His great-grandfather Jan Dvořák (1724-1777) lived just beyond the north-eastern fringe of Prague at Třeboradice, where he combined farming with innkeeping. Eventually he died in the house in which he had been born. Six out of his family of ten survived infancy, the third of these being the composer's grandfather, Jan Nepomuk Dvořák (1764-1842). The latter became both publican and butcher, first at Vodolka (now known as Odolena Voda), and from 1818 at Nelahozeves, where the composer himself was to be born. All three sons of Jan Nepomuk pursued the same two means of livelihood as their father. František (1814-1894), the youngest of these and the tenth of the twelve children, helped to run his father's business, and took it over completely on the latter's death a year after Antonín was born.

The ancestors of the composer's mother lived in the region of Slaný, slightly further west, and were cottagers who tilled their plots of land, but her father, Josef Zdeněk (1775-1852), was steward at Uhy, near Velvary. Anna Zdenková, his only daughter, became the wife of František Dvořák on November 17th, 1840.

Nelahozeves (Mühlhausen), a peaceful hamlet a dozen miles north of Prague, is situated on the banks of the Vltava near to Kralupy. It is dominated by the castle that came into the possession of the Lobkovitz family in 1623, and a few yards from the little church stands the house, formerly an inn and butcher's shop, where Dvořák was born. Today little is changed. Rural life continues in its quiet way very much as it did over a century ago, but there is now an inn on the other side of the road, the castle has become a museum and the composer's birthplace is a place of annual pilgrimage.

František and Anna Dvořák had nine children (and forty-four grandchildren), the eldest of whom was the composer Antonín, born on September 8th, 1841. Some of his forbears had some skill in playing musical instruments, which was a normal enough accomplishment in Bohemian villages and towns during those times. His two uncles, Jan Křtitel and Josef, were reputed to play the fiddle quite well, and Josef played the trumpet in addition. František himself played the zither and even wrote for it, although his modest compositions in dance forms are undistinguished. There is, however, no record of any outstanding musical talent and no hint that the family would one day produce a musical genius.

Antonín was taught to play the fiddle and to sing by Josef Spitz, the village schoolmaster and organist, who, according to his daughter's testimony, was able 'to

play on all instruments'. The young boy's violin playing was popular with regular frequenters of the inn, but František regarded this as no more than a side-line. Naturally his son would follow in the traditional family business. Accordingly, having spent six years at school, Antonín left shortly before his twelfth birthday and became apprenticed to his father in the butchers' trade. In order to improve the lad's chances of success he was sent a year later to become a butcher's apprentice at Zlonice, where he stayed with his mother's younger brother, Antonín Zdeněk (b. 1823). His uncle, who was steward to Count Kinsky, treated him like a son, for he had no children of his own. This attractive Czech town, lying some twenty or more miles away by road to the west of Nelahozeves, offered chances of picking up a little German, which was an important point for one who was destined to become a publican, but the musical opportunities were very much greater. Josef Toman, schoolmaster, and organist and choirmaster of the church, was a baritone singer, and played the violin, trumpet and double bass in addition to the organ. Antonín Liehmann (1808-1879), a teacher of German and music and a typical Czech *Musikant*, was an excellent organist with a talent for improvisation, a good violinist and clarinetist who also played the French horn, and a prolific composer as well. Thanks to these two men, and especially to Liehmann, Antonín's musical studies made great strides. He studied harmony and made rapid progress on the viola, organ and pianoforte.

When František, on his brother-in-law's advice, moved to Zlonice in an endeavour to improve his prospects by transferring his butcher's business there and becoming landlord of 'The Big Inn', both Antonín Zdeněk and Liehmann tried to persuade him to let young Antonín have a professional training in music, but their pleas fell on deaf ears. When the boy gained his journeyman's certificate on November 1st, 1856, he was packed off to Böhmisches-Kamnitz (Česká Kamenice), not far from Bohemia's common frontier with Saxony, to make good his deficiencies in the German language at the town school. While he was there, to his great delight, he was able to continue his lessons in music theory and in organ playing with the church organist, Franz Hancke, who also gave him opportunities to conduct his church choir. Antonín returned to Zlonice with his leaving certificate in the following summer.

Even had he wished to do so, František was in no position at this time to provide his son with a thorough musical training because his business in the town was not prospering. Fortunately for Antonín his uncle agreed to finance his studies, and this generous gesture, together no doubt with the lad's eagerness, resulted in František changing his mind and allowing his son to earn a living as best he could as a musician. In the autumn of 1857, at the age of sixteen, Antonín was enrolled as a student at the Prague Organ School, where he remained for the statutory two years. The Conservatory specialized in training executants, but the organ school was much better suited for those who hoped to become composers, and provided excellent tuition in practical studies as well. When Antonín arrived there K. P. Pitsch (1789-1858) was the director, but when he died the directorship fell to Josef Krejčí (1822-1881). The teaching was on sound orthodox lines and in general displayed a

characteristic intolerance of the music of the so-called neo-romantics, Wagner and Liszt.

At first Antonín lodged with his cousin Marie Plívová (née Doležalová in the Old Town, but as she had four small daughters her flat was overcrowded. A year later he moved to Charles Square to stay with his uncle Václav Dušek, who was an impoverished railway employee. It was at about this time that Antonín Zdeněk found it impossible to continue to support his nephew, and so the young student was obliged to try to make ends meet by taking pupils. A fellow student, Karel Bendl (1838-1897), who later became a well-known composer and conductor, helped Antonín considerably by allowing him to make use of his well-stocked library of scores, and also to play on his piano, for neither his cousin nor his uncle possessed one. By playing viola in the choral and orchestral concerts of the St. Cecilia Society he came into direct contact with music of the neo-romantic school, but the musical life of Prague offered him much greater riches. The many concerts and opera performances provided invaluable opportunities for him to become acquainted for the first time with many of the great musical classics, and the personal appearances of great artists like Liszt, Hans von Bülow and Clara Schumann, either as conductors or pianists, impressed him deeply.

On leaving the organ school Dvořák became violist in the Karel Komzák Band, which provided music three times a week in some of Prague's bigger inns and restaurants, and he attempted to improve his financial position by securing an organ post, but without success. When the Provisional Theatre was opened on November 18th, 1862, in order that there should be for the first time a stage specifically assigned for productions of Czech operas and dramas, the Komzák Band became the nucleus of the orchestra. The players, however, still continued their former engagements, and despite the additional work Dvořák received no more than his former small salary of eighteen gulden a month. The Komzák Band visited Hamburg in July 1863, but for Dvořák the greatest event of the year took place in February when he played in a programme devoted to Wagner's music and directed by Wagner himself.

During this period Dvořák composed a string quintet in A minor (1861), Ludvík Procházka's informal musical evenings, and his Piano Quintet in a string quartet in A major (1862) and several other works which he destroyed later. He changed his address sometime in the first half of 1864, joining forces with Mořic Anger, a colleague from the orchestra, and three other young musicians, but in the latter half of the following year he was obliged to return to his uncle's because he found the atmosphere too disturbing. That same year he began giving piano lessons to Josefina Čermáková, the sixteen-year old actress daughter of a Prague goldsmith and soon fell deeply in love with her. His aching heart caused him to write a cycle of eighteen songs entitled *Cyresses*, but this effusion failed to soften her heart, to his extreme disappointment.

The year 1865 was a productive year, during which he composed two symphonies and a cello concerto in addition to the songs, but there were still no performances of

his works to encourage him and spur him on to greater efforts and years of struggle still lay ahead. He was not upset when his first symphony was lost. Numerous works were destroyed, but he still persevered. Even if he was following false trails and not making any obvious progress he was gaining in experience and learning from some of his mistakes. He was also witnessing a remarkable inflorescence of music that was essentially Czech, and taking part in the historic series of first performances of Smetana's operas that began with *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia* and *The Bartered Bride* in 1866 and included *Dalibor* two years later. This was indeed a powerful stimulus to him, just as it was to other Czech nation was indeed a powerful stimulus to him, just as it was to other Czech nationalists.

It is very probable that because of his unqualified enthusiasm for Wagner, Dvořák may have attended every production of his operas that was mounted at the German Theatre. To Dvořák the composer here lay a temptation that he found irresistible, and as a consequence the hand of the German master weighed heavily upon him at the beginning of the 1870s when his Wagner fever was at its height. Not only did his first opera *Alfred* and the first version of *King and Charcoal Burner* dog the musical giant's footsteps, but the three string quartets that he wrote at about the same time also show his strong influence. It was only gradually that Dvořák realized that this was an unwise path to follow, although the advice he received and the attacks made on Smetana for his Wagnerism were timely warnings. In any case, how could an inexperienced and struggling composer such as Dvořák was then hope to master Wagner's elaborate compositional methods and endeavour to reach Walhalla without sinking into the quicksands that lay in his path?

It is evident that Dvořák must have been having some success as a teacher, or he would not have resigned from the Provisional Theatre orchestra after nine years' service. Gradually a few of his compositions began to be heard. Some of his songs and the Adagio of a pianoforte trio were performed at Ludvík Procházka's informal musical evenings, and his Piano Quintet in A, op. 5, was played at a matinee concert. On April 14th, 1872, Smetana conducted the overture to *King and Charcoal Burner* at a Philharmonic concert. The opera was rehearsed at the Provisional Theatre the following year, but to Dvořák's mortification it was declared unperformable and withdrawn. By the time he received this unpalatable news he was already well on the way towards a partial renunciation of Wagnerian influence and an acceptance of a good measure of classical ideals, helped by the example of Smetana. But naturally it needed time to brim about the fundamental transformation of his habits of thought, of his methods and style that now seemed necessary, and the replacement of a set of deep-rooted principles by a different set to which he had not previously given an adequate trial.

One of the first works that bears witness to a change of heart is the patriotic cantata, *The Heirs of the White Mountain*, which the Prague Hlahol Choir sang under the conductorship of Bendl on March 9th, 1873. The performance was an outstanding success, the first that Dvořák has experienced. A month or so later he was working

on a third symphony, in E flat, and he followed this with a *Romeo and Juliet* overture, an octet and two string quartets (opp. 9 and 12). In the same year Starý published a set of his songs (op. 7).

Fortunately the difficulties that he encountered with his opera, although an unpleasant setback, did not seriously shake his confidence. On the crest of the wave of his first real success he and Anna Čermáková, a former pupil, a gifted contralto singer and the younger sister of his former love, decided to get married. The ceremony took place on November 17th, 1873. Three months later he became organist of St. Adalbert's church, and by that time he had half completed his fourth symphony, the earlier of the two in D minor. In May the young couple moved into a flat of their own, Na rybníčku, No. 14, not far from where Dvořák's uncle lived. Composition went on apace. Urged on very probably by Smetana's *The Two Widows*, he composed an entirely new version of *King and Charcoal Burner* in the summer of 1874, and this was performed with some success on November 24th, with Adolf Čech conducting. At the end of the same year he wrote the one-act opera *The Stubborn Lovers*, and immediately before this composed his seventh string quartet (op. 16). Smetana conducted his E flat symphony that same year at a Philharmonic concert on March 30th, and the scherzo of the D minor symphony was performed two months later, again under Smetana's direction. At the age of thirty-three Dvořák's prospects for the future looked more promising than at any earlier time, but it is probable that what made his wife and him happiest of all was the birth of their son Otakar.

Hearing that the State was offering a prize to young, talented and impecunious writers, artists and musicians, Dvořák decided to compete and submitted his E flat and D minor symphonies together with a chamber music composition, possibly the F minor string quartet. After waiting several months he heard in February 1875 that the jury had awarded him the handsome prize of 400 gulden.¹ This encouraging news may have helped to make this a prolific year for Dvořák, a year in which he composed his fifth symphony (op. 76 in F), the grand opera *Vanda*, the string quintet in G, the piano trio in B flat, the piano quartet in D, the Serenade in E and four *Moravian Duets*. In the same year Starý published his string quartet in A minor, op. 16, and Wetzler issued his Potpourri based on *King and Charcoal Burner*.

One of his compositions of that year stands somewhat apart from the rest, for in it we can see a much stronger individuality, greater clarity of thought and singleness of mind, and a surer command of the means of expression than in anything he had composed up to that time. It seems certain that when Dvořák wrote his F major symphony he not only strove to create something finer than anything he had written before, but also that he discovered how this could be done. He still had far to go to reach his apogee, but at last he was a master of his craft with a distinctive character of his own.

Compositions continued to flow from Dvořák's pen. The G minor piano trio, the string quartet in E, fifteen *Moravian Duets*, twelve *Evening Songs*, the piano concerto

and the *Theme and Variations* for piano were all written in 1876, and in the same year the *Stabat Mater* was sketched. This was then laid aside until the deaths within a month of each other of his son and daughter impelled him to return to it and orchestrate it. *Vanda* was performed but it was a failure. Early in the following year he composed a comic opera, *The Cunning Peasant*. Shortly before this, feeling that he was much more secure financially, Dvořák decided to relinquish his post as organist, a decision that he almost certainly reached after hearing the news that he was to receive the Austrian State Prize for the third time. Brahms had apparently been appointed to the Commission in succession to Herbeck in 1875.² In November 1877 the by then childless couple moved to Žitná ulice 10 (Kornthorgasse 10), which then became their permanent home. In the following June their daughter Otilie was born.

At the time when Dvořák was about to be awarded the State Prize for the fourth time, Brahms saw clearly that this gifted Czech composer could not make headway in the musical world easily if his works were only published by small firms in Prague. He therefore wrote to Simrock of Berlin, his own publisher, recommending him to take Dvořák's *Moravian Duets* and perhaps other things besides. This started a chain reaction. Dvořák and Brahms, naturally, became firm friends, and remained so until the latter's death. Simrock commissioned the first set of *Slavonic Dances*, and published the duets. By writing a review of the dances and duets in glowing terms, the critic Ehlerl brought the unknown Czech composer to the attention of the German people, and in just under a year after this notice had appeared Joachim, who had heard much about Dvořák direct from Brahms, gave the first performance of the string sextet in Berlin (9. XI. 1879) with the composer present. Had it not been for this kind action of Brahms it would have been impossible for Dvořák, despite the blossoming of his genius, to have gained such a firm foothold abroad in so short a space of time. Success in Germany opened the door to England, and that in turn eventually led to an invitation from America.

The period of this sudden change in Dvořák's fortunes coincides with a decisive change in his musical style, the adoption of a strongly national attitude, and a far greater use of the rhythms and spirit of the folk dances of his country than ever before. This factor appears to have facilitated the acceptance of his music abroad. It could be melancholy or bursting with life, and it was both melodious and colourful, but above all here was music that was new, different, that is, from what audiences were accustomed to, and with an instantaneous appeal. The *Slavonic Dances* whetted people's appetites but the more solid fare proved to be equally welcome. In September 1879 Taubert gave the first performance of the third *Slavonic Rhapsody* in Berlin. Two months later this work was conducted in Budapest by Erkel and in Vienna by Richter, who six months afterwards took it to London. The first and second *Rhapsodies* and the sextet and string quartet in E flat appeared in concert programmes in Vienna, Germany and England. Two more works, written in 1880, gained Dvořák further laurels, the *Gipsy Melodies* and the sixth symphony in D major. At this time he was at work on the violin concerto, and endeavouring to meet the

criticisms of Joachim to whom he had turned for advice, but this work was not finished until a little later.

One work, however, which lacked obviously national characteristics was of considerable importance in gaining support and sympathy for Dvořák in foreign countries. This was the *Stabat Mater* which was sung in the Hungarian capital in 1882, in London the following year, and which had crossed the Atlantic by 1884. The Czech composer's music was arousing so much interest that in Vienna, Dresden and Hamburg the possibility of performing one of Dvořák's operas was very seriously considered. Dresden and Hamburg presented *The Cunning Peasant* in the year Simrock published it. At the Saxon *première* in October 1882, which the composer attended, his opera was a triumphal success, which cannot be said of the Prague performance of four years earlier. Full of enthusiasm he wrote to Simrock: 'A pity, a pity that you weren't at Dresden! You would certainly have rejoiced heartily at the great success and the exemplary presentation, just as I have. Schuch prepared the opera splendidly.'

A fortnight before leaving Prague for Dresden Dvořák's new grand opera *Dimitrij* had been performed there for the first time and was very well received. Both Jauner, conductor of the Vienna Court Opera, and Schuch took note of this, but neither of them was prepared to risk a production. In Vienna, where there was strong anti-Czech feeling, Hanslick thought that Dvořák would be wise to drop his nationalism and become more cosmopolitan. If he abandoned Slavonic subjects and instead set German libretti, there seemed excellent reasons in Hanslick's opinion for thinking that he would emerge as a highly successful composer on the German and Vienna stage. Thinking along somewhat similar lines, and after discussing the matter with Hanslick, the Generalintendant of the Court Opera, Baron Hoffmann, offered the Czech composer two German libretti in 1883. At about the same time Brahms, who had been repaid immeasurably for his wisdom in moving to Vienna, may have made it plain to Dvořák that he would be well advised to do the same. At the beginning of August 1883 an invitation came from the Philharmonic Society of London inviting him to conduct some of his compositions at one of their concerts early in the following year, and he naturally accepted, but this did nothing to help him to resolve his operatic dilemma. The world was opening up to him. He was a simple, unspoilt man, but he must have felt flattered by the increasing attention that was being bestowed on him.

The crux of the problem rested with his conscience. It was natural for him to be ambitious, and being so he had set his heart on becoming a leading composer of opera, which made Vienna's overtures all the more tempting. But he was faced with the prospect of being disloyal to his own nation, and so betraying the national cause in which he so strongly believed. Even though he did not care to identify himself closely with either of the most ardently national Czech political groups, he had a profound love for and pride in his country.

When he was invited to be the honoured guest of the German Artists' Club in London he declined, explaining that he was not German. He preferred to avoid using the German language, unless there appeared to be no convenient alternative. He had the greatest difficulty in getting Simrock to print his first name on his music in the contracted form 'Ant.', in place of the German form 'Anton'. Simrock's lack of understanding in this matter caused Dvořák to retort: 'Don't make fun of my Czech brothers, and don't be sorry for me either. What I ask of you is only a wish, and if you cannot fulfil it then I have the right to regard that as an unkindness the like of which I have not found with either English or French publishers.'²³ As Simrock would not give way, Dvořák made himself even clearer in his next letter, in which he said: 'Your last letter with its humorous national-political explanation amused me greatly; I am only sorry that you are so badly informed. . . . But *what have we to do to do with politics!* It is well that we are free *to dedicate our services to a splendid art.* And may the nations never perish that *possess art* and represent it, however small they may be. Forgive me for this, but I simply wished to tell you that an artist also has a fatherland in which he must have firm faith and for which he must have a warm heart.'²⁴

Dvořák had a simple and unquestioning faith in God, yet he seems to have been a little shaken in his belief during this time of testing, for we notice that the phrase 'Bohu díky!' (Thanks to God) which he invariably wrote on the final pages of his manuscripts is missing in the F minor trio, the *Scherzo capriccioso*, the *Hussite* overture and the piano quintet, although it does occur at the end of the D minor symphony. This uncertainty is also reflected in some of the compositions of that time, or rather, it is seen in the hesitations and vacillations that occurred while he was at work on them, yet the works themselves are among Dvořák's greatest. The artistic and spiritual crisis that he was passing through made him see the art of creation in an entirely new light, and drew from him a profundity, a nobility and an epic grandeur which would have been impossible if he had not experienced such heart-searching.

Even though he found the temptations that lay before him very alluring, and it took him some three years to overcome them, there was only one satisfactory path for him to take. He had to remain loyal to Bohemia and his fellow countrymen.

During this period of crisis Dvořák paid four visits to England, where he was lionized and feted as never before. He took with him on the first of these journeys the *Hussite* overture, the *Nocturne* for strings and the *Scherzo capriccioso*, which were all new to London. The overture was for the Philharmonic Society programme on March 20th, 1884, and the other two works for the Crystal Palace concert two days later. At the first of these concerts he conducted his sixth symphony and second *Slavonic Rhapsody*, and W. J. Winch sang two of the *Gipsy Melodies*. When these songs were repeated at the Sydenham concert Dvořák himself accompanied Winch. A few days earlier the composer conducted his *Stabat Mater* at the Royal Albert Hall. Dvořák had every reason to be satisfied with his visit. Apart from the great success of his concerts he had some excellent friends, and among them his host Oscar Beringer, the pianist, and Henry Littleton, head of the music publishing firm of

Novello, Ewer & Co., who was extremely active personally in promoting concerts. Furthermore, he returned to Prague with commissions in his pocket for large choral works for the Birmingham and Leeds Festivals, and an invitation to return in the autumn to conduct some of his works at the Three Choirs Festival at Worcester. On June 14th he was elected an Honorary Member of the Philharmonic Society, and he was then asked by the Society to write a symphony for them. He therefore had enough work on hand to occupy him for eighteen months.

Being affluent for the first time in his life, he was able to realize an ambition that he had had for some time, to buy himself a house and a plot of land in the country. He acquired these at Vysoká where his brother-in-law Count Kauniz had his estate, near the mining town of Příbram some forty miles to the south of Prague. During the winter months he remained in the capital, but from spring until autumn he was at Vysoká, walking in the forest early in the mornings, enjoying the peace and solitude of nature, rearing pigeons, chatting with peasants and miners about the village and at the inn, and either composing or simply resting according to his mood.

At Worcester on September 11th he conducted the *Stabat Mater* at the morning concert and his sixth symphony in the afternoon. He appeared for the first time in Germany as composer-conductor on November 21st when his *Hussite* overture and piano concerto were played in Berlin, with Anna Grosser-Rilke as soloist. The main purpose of his next visit to London was to direct the *première* of his seventh symphony in D minor at the fourth Philharmonic concert on April 2nd, 1885. This time he remained in London for a month and so was able to conduct his piano concerto when Franz Rummel played it at the Society's next concert on May 6th, and a week later he conducted Mr. Geaussent's Choir at St. James's Hall in the lately revised version of his *Hymnus*.⁵ Since this work had only just been published by Novello, this was almost certainly the first performance in its final form. The Philharmonic audience was less enthusiastic about the seventh symphony than they were about its predecessor.

Dvořák's fourth visit was spent directing the final rehearsals and the first English performance of *The Spectre's Bride* at Birmingham, but he found time to visit Littleton's house at Brighton, where he was surprised and delighted to see the beautiful English ladies bathing *in public*. The concert took place on August 27th and was immensely successful. Both the public and the press were most enthusiastic, and Gounod's new work *Mors et Vita* was put in the shade. The *Sunday Times* described the concert as 'a great and unalloyed success'. The *Times* commented, 'Herr Dvořák, although he does not possess the graphic power and the orchestral resources of Berlioz or Liszt, has treated a difficult subject with the technical skill and earnest inspiration of a true artist.' When the cantata was repeated in London early in February, Ebenezer Prout, the *Athenaeum* critic, compared Dvořák's work with another written on a similar subject, Raff's *Lenore* Symphony. 'In both cases the appropriateness of the musical illustrations may be admitted!', he said, 'but Raff frequently becomes ugly, Dvořák never.' And he concluded with these remarks: 'That

the work will take permanent rank among the masterpieces of musical art there cannot, we think, be a shadow of doubt.'

The growth in Dvořák's stature that we have noticed in the compositions of these last years was due partly to the influence of Brahms, whose presence is sometimes felt either directly or indirectly. Also there is rather less obvious use of national features, unless, for instance, a movement takes on the character of a *furiant*. In the years that followed Dvořák once again adopted a strongly national outlook, but if we compare the second set of *Slavonic Dances* with the first we find that the prevailing tone is now rather more serious. Dvořák was still capable of unbridled exuberance, as in the Scherzo and Finale of the piano quintet, but the experiences of those difficult years can be seen to have enriched his musical idiom, even in the lighter forms. These tendencies continued for six years, a period that embraces *The Jacobin*, the E flat piano quartet, the G major symphony and the *Dumky* Trio, as well as two liturgical works that transcend national frontiers.

During the first half of 1886 the composer was busily engaged on the oratorio *S. Ludmila*, which he was writing for Leeds, but once that was finished he turned to the new *Slavonic Dances* that Simrock had been pestering him to write for so long. Dvořák was again given a tumultuous reception by his English friends when he conducted the *première* of his oratorio on October 15th; in fact, as he himself told his friend Rus, 'at the end of Part I the whole audience, chorus and orchestra burst out into such cheers that I felt quite queer.'⁶ However, the success of the work in England was short-lived. Dvořák conducted it twice in London, but practically no attempt to perform it was made by the provincial choral societies.

Although Dvořák had made such an enviable reputation for himself, especially abroad, and was esteemed very highly by so many distinguished musicians of the time, yet, as the following extract from a letter to a Příbram choirmaster shows, he still remained at heart a modest and humble peasant. 'I must confess to you candidly', he wrote, 'that your kind letter took me a little by surprise, because its excessive servility and humility make it seem as if you were addressing some demigod, which of course I never was, am not and never shall be. I am just a plain Czech musician, disliking such exaggerated humility, and despite the fact that I have moved a bit in the great musical world, I still remain just what I was "a simple Czech Musikant."⁷

In 1887 Dvořák's mind turned towards earlier compositions. He rewrote a substantial part of *King and Charcoal Burner*, and also brought his brilliant *Symphonic Variations* out of cold storage, where they had unaccountably lain for nine years. When he offered this work to Richter the latter accepted it with alacrity, and was rewarded with a triumphant success when he presented it in London on May 16th. At about the same time Dvořák also revised several compositions of the sixties. His new works included the Mass in D, the piano quintet and *The Jacobin*, an opera he was engaged on until the autumn of 1888. When Tchaikovsky visited Prague in February that year the two composers became firm friends, and they were able to renew their friendship at the end of November when the Russian composer returned to conduct

his fifth symphony and *Eugene Onegin*. In March Dvořák conducted his *Stabat Mater* in Budapest. He visited Dresden a year later to conduct three of his compositions, including another work that he had revised, the fifth symphony in F, which had already been heard abroad as early as April 7th, 1888, when Manns performed it at the Crystal Palace.

His new opera was performed and warmly received in February 1889. In June he was honoured with the Austrian Order of the Iron Crown, and consequently paid a special visit to Vienna a few months later to have an audience with the Emperor Franz Josef I. Between these two last events he composed the E flat piano quartet and one of his happiest works, the eighth symphony in G major. At the end of October he visited Berlin for the first German performance of his seventh symphony, with Hans von Bülow in command. This was another triumph for the composer.

Having been invited to Russia by Tchaikovsky, Dvořák spent the month of March 1890 in Moscow and St. Petersburg. He conducted his F major symphony, first *Slavonic Rhapsody*, *Symphonic Variations* and *Scherzo capriccioso* in Moscow on the 11th, and at St. Petersburg on the 22nd the D major symphony was performed and the *Scherzo* repeated. His music was received with less enthusiasm than he had become accustomed to in England and Germany, but he had strong support from Moscow's German community. He was given a silver coffee service as a souvenir of his Moscow visit. At Petersburg a silver goblet was presented to him at a banquet given by the Czech Aid Society, and on the eve of his departure he was the guest of honour at a Russian Musical Society banquet. A month later he paid another visit to the Philharmonic Society of London to conduct the first English performance of his G major symphony. He was very busily engaged for most of that year composing his *Requiem Mass* for Birmingham. After having refused a previous invitation to join the staff of the Prague Conservatory he agreed to do so in October, and took up duties there early the following year. Further honours were heaped upon him. He received the honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Charles University, Prague, in March 1891. On June 15th he conducted his G major symphony and *Stabat Mater* at Cambridge, and, having thus demonstrated his academic fitness, the degree of Doctor of Music *honoris causa* was conferred on him the next day. He was embarrassed to find that all the speeches were in Latin, which he did not understand, but he consoled himself later with the thought that it is better to compose a *Stabat Mater* than to know Latin.

Hitherto Simrock had published most of Dvořák's compositions, for according to their contract of 1879 he had the option to purchase any new work of Dvořák's prior to its being offered to another publisher. Simrock had given Dvořák 300 marks for the earlier set of *Slavonic Dances*, which, bearing in mind that the composer was unknown in Germany at the time, was a fair enough price; but for Simrock the work proved to be a gold mine. After Dvořák had become internationally famous the publisher offered him 3,000 marks for his D minor symphony, but the composer told

him that another firm was prepared to offer more. After hearing Dvořák and Hanslick play the piano duet version of the symphony Simrock agreed to double his original offer, but at the same time he pressed Dvořák to write some more of those lucrative *Slavonic Dances*. When the time came for the composer to fall in with his publisher's wishes he was rewarded with another 3,000 marks.⁸ Simrock tried to encourage the Czech composer to write more songs and pianoforte pieces, because experience showed them to be a better commercial proposition than symphonies, big choral works and chamber music.

The relationship between the two men had been strained before, but in 1890 during the negotiations for the publication of the G major symphony it reached breaking point. In his reply to Dvořák's letter of January 3rd Simrock stated his case as follows :

If only I did sufficient business with your symphonies to be repaid for my enormous expense! But this is far from being the case! and I am thousands down on them. That is how it is "and nothing can change it. What use is it if I make money on one or six works and lose it again on four others? I can't carry on my business like that! If the performances are successful the composer always thinks his work will sell. You were successful here over Bülow's performance of your D minor symphony, but subsequently not a single copy, not even a piano duet version, was sold. Bülow has been performing the *Hussite* overture for years "despite opposition! The public never likes it – I've already observed this six times. He doesn't play your overture *My Home* (which the public would enjoy!) "and it is the same with other works ! For a long time I had to urge him to perform the second symphony before he finally did so! On the other hand the third (in F major) was sent back to me after the rehearsal "This cannot be performed"! And this third symphony has never yet been performed anywhere in Germany and Austria! The same is true of the *Psalm* op. 79. So unless you also give me small and easy piano pieces (and even these will sell almost exclusively in Bohemia, as, for instance, op. 85) it won't be possible to publish big works.

Dvořák assumes in his letter of February 17th that Simrock is no longer considering buying his symphonies, and states that if the publisher will not accept his symphony by the autumn at the latest he will be obliged to look elsewhere. Since no offer was forthcoming he wrote again on October 7th, saying that he would have to try to find another purchaser for his works in view of the enormous cost of educating his children. The quarrel reached its climax two days later when Dvořák sent the following letter to Simrock :

Since you have thought it right once more to reject my symphony I shall not offer you any big expensive works in future, for I shall know in advance, because of what you say, that you cannot publish such works. You advise me to write small

works; but that is difficult, for how can I help it if no theme for a song or a piano piece comes into my head? Just now my mind is full of big ideas “I shall do as God wills. That will be best.

Simrock attempted to parry this threat by invoking their agreement of 1879, which made Dvořák extremely angry. In reply he pointed out that, quite apart from the symphony, he had been waiting for almost a year to hear if Simrock would take his Mass. The rupture was now complete, and for more than a year no letters passed between the two men. Dvořák therefore offered the symphony to Novello, who published it in 1892 and issued his Mass early the following year. It would appear that the business acumen that Dvořák displayed was due in large measure to his wife.

In the spring of 1891 Dvořák received a telegram from Vienna enquiring if he would accept an important post in New York, but he showed no interest at the time. Mrs. Jeannette Thurber, a very persevering woman and the wife of a wealthy grocer, was behind this offer. When she arrived in Paris she arranged for the following telegram to be sent to the composer on June 5th: ‘Would you accept position Director National Conservatory of Music New York October 1892 also lead six concerts of your works.’ This arrived before he left for Cambridge, but on his return he found a letter awaiting him giving fuller particulars, and the position was clarified further six weeks later when the contract arrived. He would have three hours teaching a day, prepare four students’ concerts, conduct six concerts of his own music in American towns, have a four-month vacation and receive 5,000 dollars per annum. At first he felt inclined to accept the concert engagements, but not the directorship, but that did not suit Mrs. Thurber. During the second half of November,⁹ after making several amendments to the contract, he agreed to accept the position for two years, although he still had some misgivings about his prolonged absence from the land he loved so dearly, and his separation from his family.

Dvořák interrupted his work on the three overtures, *In Nature’s Realm*, *Carnival* and *Othello*, in order to conduct his *Requiem* at Birmingham on October 9th, 1891. Again he scored a great success, even though the performance left something to be desired. During the first five months of the year of his departure for America he undertook a farewell concert tour with Ferdinand Lachner, the violinist, and Hanuš Wihan, the cellist. The main item of their programmes in the thirty-nine towns of Bohemia and Moravia that they visited was the *Dumky* Trio, but they also played the violin *Mazurek*, a Rondo written especially for Wihan and some arrangements of Dvořák’s music. Some light is shed on the Czech composer’s character by two events of that summer. Showing indifference to the accumulation of fresh laurels, he did not bother to travel to Vienna for the first performance in the Austrian capital of his opera *Dimitrij* on June 2nd. Just as characteristically, while his fiftieth birthday was being celebrated in Prague in the previous year he had remained at his beloved Vysoká. On the other hand, two days before the Vienna performance he was deeply affected by

the Příbram mining disaster, for he knew personally many of those who worked underground.

Dvořák was due to arrive in New York when the Columbus Fourth Centennial Celebrations were in progress. The President of the National Conservatory, Mrs. Thurber, had requested him to write a commemorative work, and in her letter of July 10th, 1892, she said: ‘As for the Columbus Cantata I do hope you will find it convenient to write something for the 12th October. *The American Flag*, which was sent to Mr. Littleton,¹⁰ would be most appropriate.’ It would have suited Dvořák to have had Rodman Drake’s poem sooner than this, but to ensure that he had a new work completed in time he made a setting of the *Te Deum*. He began work on the cantata at the beginning of August, but when he was about to depart the work was still only in sketch form. On September 10th he left Prague for America with his wife, their eldest daughter and son, Otilie aged fourteen and Antonín who was five years younger. He also took with him Josef J. Kovařík, an American-Czech violinist who had just completed his studies at the Prague Conservatory, and who was very soon to become a member of Dvořák’s staff in New York. They embarked at Bremen on the 17th and landed in New York ten days later.

Besides the formal welcomes that Dvořák was given on his arrival, he was besieged by journalists who wanted to find out all manner of insignificant details about the great composer who was now in their midst. One of the published descriptions of him reads as follows :

He is not an awesome personality at all. He is much taller than his pictures would imply, and possesses not a tithe of the bulldog ferocity to be encountered in some of them. A man about 5 ft. 10 or 11 inches, of great natural dignity, a man of character, Dvořák impresses me as an original, natural and “as Rossini would say, to be natural is greater than to be original. . . . He is not beautiful in the forms of face, but the lines of his brow are so finely modelled, and there is so much emotional life in the fiery eyes and lined face, that when he lightens up in conversation, his face is not easily forgotten.¹¹

Mrs. Thurber knew well how to gain publicity for her enterprise, and she had no difficulty in fanning the flames of controversy later by encouraging Dvořák to air his views on the founding of a national American school of composition, which was one of her loftiest dreams and a powerful reason for inviting the Czech musician to America. Her National Conservatory, however, proved to be different from what Dvořák imagined it to be, for no diplomas were awarded, and fees were only charged to those who could afford to pay them. He was in complete sympathy with Negroes being given free tuition.

He settled down in New York, often visited the Central Park, and, finding it far from easy to pursue his hobby of train-spotting, he made, instead, an effort to see all the larger boats leave for Europe, and if possible to board them on sailing days,

examine them from stem to stern and chat with the captain and his officers. His thoughts turned homewards very frequently, and sometimes his heart was heavy because he was so far away. On October 9th the New York Czech Circle gave an immense banquet in his honour. The *Te Deum* was not performed three days later as planned, but was included in a concert of the composer's compositions on the 21st. At the end of the following month Dvořák conducted his *Requiem Mass* in Boston. Having completed *The American Flag* early in January, he began work on his ninth symphony, finishing it on May 24th. He had originally intended to return home for the vacation. Edward Rosewater, the Czech-born owner of *The Omaha Bee* (a daily newspaper), invited him to stay with him. But when Kovařík talked to him about Spillville, a little Czech settlement in the north-east corner of Iowa, eleven miles from the nearest railway station, and where his father was schoolmaster, organist and choirmaster, Dvořák made up his mind to spend the summer there among his compatriots, and to arrange for his sister-in-law to bring the four other children to the United States for the holiday period.

The children arrived on May 31st, and three days later they all started on the long journey to Spillville, spending ten hours in Chicago on the way. Dvořák felt at home at once in the peaceful village. On the following morning those who attended the little church of St. Wenceslas for seven o'clock mass, which was celebrated daily without music, were astonished to hear the familiar hymn 'Bože před tvou velebností' (O God before Thy Majesty) played on the organ by their visitor. During the remainder of his stay Dvořák made a point of playing this and other well-known hymns daily at mass, and the congregation joined in enthusiastically. Finding the atmosphere of Spillville so delightful, he was immediately inspired to compose, and within two months produced finished scores of the quartet in F and the string quintet in E flat.

At Spillville his wrath with his publisher melted. By standing up for his own rights, and by refusing to make the first move to heal the breach, he had taught Simrock a lesson. He now offered him almost everything he had and stated his price: the three overtures, 2,000 marks; *Dumky* Trio, 2,000 marks; E minor symphony, 2,000 marks; the 'cello Rondo, the quartet in F and *Silent Woods* for 'cello, 500 marks each. Simrock took all of these works. When Dvořák heard later that Brahms had agreed to do the proof reading in order to expedite publication, he was deeply touched, and in writing to Simrock on February 5th, 1894, said: 'I can scarcely believe there is another composer in the world who would do as much!'

Early in August Dvořák travelled to Chicago, and on the 12th, which was 'Czech Day' at the World Exhibition, he conducted his G major symphony, three of the second set of *Slavonic Dances* and the overture *My Home*. In the evening he was feted by the Chicago Circle of Czech Musicians. He again left Spillville on September 1st to pay his promised visit to Rosewater at Omaha, where another banquet was arranged for him. From there he went to St. Paul, Minnesota, to visit Father Rynda, a Moravian, and met many of his countrymen among the 3,000 guests at the banquet

with which he was honoured. But possibly his visit to the beautiful Minnehaha Falls on the 5th made the deepest impression. The family finally left Spillville on the 16th, going first to Chicago and then to Buffalo, from where they went to see the Niagara Falls. After he had gazed at the falls for several minutes, Dvořák exclaimed: 'Damn it, that will be a symphony in B minor!'

It was not easy for Dvořák to settle down again in New York after the idyllic life at Spillville, and both he and his daughter suffered from serious attacks of nostalgia. For his hundredth opus he wrote the *Sonatina* for violin and piano especially for his children, a charming gesture, but he was anticipating a little, for at the time opp. 98 and 99 had not been composed. After this he made a few preliminary sketches for a project that Mrs. Thurber was urging him to undertake, an American opera on the subject of *Hiawatha*, but owing to the delays over procuring a suitable libretto he made hardly any progress.

He became particularly friendly with Anton Seidl, the conductor, with whom he had many stimulating discussions on musical matters. He asked his friend to conduct the first performance of his new symphony, and Seidl did so at the New York Philharmonic Society's concert at the Carnegie Hall on December 16th, 1893, preceded by a public rehearsal a day earlier. As this was the first work Dvořák had written on American soil, and it represented the beginning of a new stage in his development, one in which he made some use of 'American' features, and as the *premiere* was one of the most outstanding triumphs of his life, it was, as the Americans themselves appreciated, an event of historic importance. Shortly afterwards the other two works were performed, the string quartet in Boston on January 1st and the string quintet in New York a few days later. Dvořák composed the *Biblical Songs* in March, and then set about revising *Dimitrij*.

In the previous November he was faced with the need to come to a decision about the possible renewal of his contract with Mrs. Thurber for another one or two years. There were considerable financial advantages in remaining, as he pointed out on November 16th in a letter to the Director of the Prague Conservatory, Dr. Josef Tragy, who was allowing him leave of absence, but he wished to be guided by his chief's advice. He was extremely reluctant to tie his hands irretrievably, and Mrs. Thurber was obliged to wait several months for his answer. But she herself may be held indirectly responsible for the delay. As her letters to the composer show, Dvořák was receiving his salary rather irregularly.¹² Undoubtedly one of his main reasons for refusing to commit himself was that he had a deep longing to be back in Bohemia once again, but he gave other reasons to Mrs. Thurber.¹³ At last he decided to return to the United States for a six-month period, November 1st to April 30th, and signed the contract on April 25th, 1894.¹⁴ On the same date Mrs. Thurber gave him a promissory note in the following terms: 'It is hereby understood and agreed that unless you received the \$ 7,500 due you, on your salary of the present scholastic year, on or before October "6th, 1894, the contract for further services as Director

of the National Conservatory of Music dated April 28th, 1894, may be annulled at your pleasure.’

As the time approached for Dvořák’s return to New York he became somewhat anxious as to whether Mrs. Thurber would fulfil her promise, and a series of cables passed between them. On September 8th she assured him that she would send him the steamer tickets and the balance of salary by the appointed date, but a month later half the arrears of his stipend was still owing.¹⁵ Dvořák’s displeasure is shown by the cable he sent on October 12th: ‘May be cannot come without receiving all.’ However, he was prepared to accept this rather unsatisfactory state of affairs, and on the 16th he departed for New York, taking with him his wife and their second son Otakar, who was nine years old at the time. They sailed in S.S. Bismarck from Hamburg on the 15th, and on November 1st he resumed his duties at the National Conservatory.

During his second stay in America Dvořák was less happy than before. He remained in New York, and consequently there were no experiences to match those he had had in the two previous years. He missed his family and his friends, and his thoughts often travelled back to his homeland and especially to Vysoká. Almost as soon as he arrived he was made an honorary member of the New York Philharmonic Society, and in February he was similarly honoured by the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde of Vienna. In the superb ‘cello concerto that he wrote during the winter months there is scarcely a trace of ‘Americanism’, which suggests that although he still believed that American folk music should serve as the basis of American national music,¹⁶ personally he wished to compose music that was wholly Czech.

Dvořák had little thought of continuing in his New York post after the end of his third year, but the ever-optimistic Mrs. Thurber booked passages for him, his wife and four daughters for October 17th, presumably because he had not given a clear-cut refusal to Miss Adele Margulies, who was negotiating on Mrs. Thurber’s behalf.¹⁷ In September 1896 Mrs. Thurber tried again to entice him to America, and in December, without sufficient justification, the *Wiener Tageblatt* published the news that he was returning. He toyed with the idea of going for two months. In 1897, in May or possibly April, he received from her a draft copy of a contract for an engagement from April 1st to June 1st in the following year, but he did not complete this. In his subsequent negotiations with Miss Margulies he was prepared to bind himself to very little, and in his last letter to her (20. VIII. 1597) he said in exasperation: ‘It is enough to drive one to despair the way you want to drag me in! I have already told you that you may announce my name, but I do not want to be under any obligations to the public and Mrs. Thurber as a result !’ After that we hear no more of the matter.

It was a wonderful relief to Dvořák to be home again. He spent the first few months resting, meeting Hanslick and Simrock at Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad), visiting Judge Rus at Písek and other friends besides, revisiting the Bohemian Forest, and

enjoying a quiet life at Vysoká with his family and his pigeons. He wrote nothing new. Only after resuming his world at the Prague Conservatory in November did he begin composing again, first the G major quartet, and then the quartet in A flat on which he had made a start before leaving America. In December he went to Vienna where he saw Brahms and Richter. He returned there two months later for the latter’s performance of his ninth symphony, and yet again at the end of March to conduct *The Spectre’s Bride* at the Ljubljana Choral Society’s charity concert.

A few days earlier he had been to London, for the last time, to conduct the world premiere of the ‘cello concerto, but he now found London had fewer attractions for him than before. He complained of the atrocious March wind and the interminable rain, and he could not get any food or coffee to his liking until he was invited to Novello’s.¹⁸ He is reported as having said: ‘A good meat soup is the foundation (of a meal) like the basses in the orchestra, and I could never get a good foundation of soup in England.’¹⁹ His main consolation was that both the public and the critics thought very highly of his new work.

On the last of the above-mentioned visits to Vienna he went with the Bohemian Quartet to visit Bruckner, who was already a sick man, and also to see Brahms. Brahms tried hard to persuade him to move to Vienna, and to become a professor of composition at the Conservatory, doubtless in the hope of counterbalancing the influence of Bruckner. Since Dvořák would have found it too expensive to live with his family in the Austrian capital, Brahms magnanimously offered to put his personal fortune at the disposal of the Czech musician. But Dvořák, deeply moved, loved his country too much to accept. It was on this same occasion, as Suk has related in his memoirs, that Brahms, in referring to Schopenhauer, talked of his own agnosticism. This may not have been the first time that Dvořák had heard his friend express such views, but he left his flat in shocked silence. When at last he spoke, he said: ‘Such a man, such a fine soul-and he believes in nothing, he believes in nothing!’

At the beginning of 1896, in his fifty-fifth year, Dvořák began the composition of a series of symphonic poems, a type of work that was quite new to him. By the end of April he had completed *The Water Goblin*, *The Noon Witch* and *The Golden Spinning Wheel*. *The Wild Dove* followed several months later during the period in which the first three works were being heard in public for the first time, under the direction of Henry J. Wood and Richter in London. The fifth work, *Heroic Song*, was not composed until the second half of 1897. These works represent the penultimate stage in the Czech master’s development, and to some extent paved the way for the final phase, in which he was wholly immersed in opera composition. Even before he began work on *Heroic Song* he was dealing with operatic problems, for he had begun a thorough revision of *The Jacobin*. The two string quartets that he wrote late in 1895 were in fact the last of his compositions to stem from classical forms as examples of absolute music.

Just as he was starting to compose *The Wild Dove* Dvořák asked Simrock for news of Brahms, for he had heard that he was seriously ill. He talked of going to visit him,

but hesitated to do so. At last he went during March 1897, and some three weeks later he returned for the sad occasion of the funeral of the man who had been such a wonderful friend to him, and to whom he owed so much. A few months later he lost another friend when Karel Bendl died. Several weeks after this he heard that he had been appointed to succeed Brahms on the jury that recommended Austrian State Prize awards.

A programme of the Czech composer's compositions was conducted by Mengelberg at Amsterdam on February 13th in the following year. The Bohemian Quartet happened to be in Holland at the time, and reported to Dvořák that the entire concert was an outstanding success. Dvořák's pupils were already gaining recognition at home and abroad, Josef Suk and Vítězslav Novák as composers, and Oskar Nedbal, viola player of the Bohemian Quartet, as a conductor. Suk, who lived with the Dvořáks, had fallen in love with Otilie Dvořáková. November 17th, 1898, was a particularly happy day, for the two young people's wedding was arranged to coincide with the silver wedding of the bride's parents. Eight days later the Emperor Franz Josef bestowed a great honour on Dvořák, when he gave him the Medal of Honour for *litteris et artibus*, a distinction that had only previously been granted to Brahms. The Czech master was delighted with the 'great golden platter', as he called it, that he was expected to wear suspended from his neck.

A few months earlier the composer had found an opera libretto that suited him admirably, a Czech fairy tale that had pronounced comic aspects. In this new work, *Kate and the Devil*, he made a severely limited yet significant use of Wagnerian methods, which he had shunned for many years, except on a limited scale when revising scenes in his two previous operas. By now he had good reason to believe that he could succeed along these lines, and he was convinced that it was the right path for him to follow. In his next two works for the stage he went even further in the same direction. Apart from one significant break in his work, a journey to Vienna for the sake of attending Mahler's performance of his *Heroic Song*, progress on the opera proceeded smoothly, and by February 1899 he had completed it. Nine months later he witnessed a very successful performance of the work at the Prague National Theatre.

Dvořák now had no thought for any other type of work, and having finished his opera he immediately began to look for another libretto. During this interval he went to Berlin to hear *Heroic Song* under the direction of Nikisch, and a month later he was on his way to Budapest. He was the pianist in a concert of his own chamber compositions in the Hungarian capital on December 19th, and on the day following he conducted there Carnival overture, *Heroic Song*, and his 'cello concerto, with Wihan as soloist, at a concert of the Philharmonic Society. Soon after this his disciple Nedbal was having such success conducting his *New World* symphony at the World's Fair in Paris, at St. Petersburg, Berlin and elsewhere, that it was becoming unnecessary for the composer to present his own works. When Dvořák was given the opportunity to conduct the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra on April 4th, 1900, he

chose to perform the *Tragic* overture of Brahms, Schubert's *Unfinished symphony*, Beethoven's seventh symphony and his own *Wild Dove*.

Within a short time Dvořák had begun the composition of *Rusalka*, another fairy tale opera, but a tragic one this time. It was finished before the end of November, in time for it to be put into production that season. The first performance, which took place on March 31st, 1901, achieved the kind of result he had been working towards for years, for it was the greatest triumph he had ever had with a work for the stage. At last he had written an opera that was accepted by his countrymen as a great national work of art that could take its place beside the best-loved operas of Smetana.

Further honours came the way of the venerable Czech master. He was made a member of the Austrian House of Peers, but he only once availed himself of his privilege by attending a debate. In July 1901 he became the nominal head of the Prague Conservatory. He absented himself from the festivities arranged to celebrate his sixtieth birthday, paying Mahler a visit at that time in order to give him the score of *Rusalka* in preparation for a possible production in Vienna. However, he was unable to avoid seeing and hearing the torchlight procession and serenade in the street below his flat, which took place early in November when the cycle of his operas at the National Theatre was at an end. Although he could not bear all this fuss, he was touched by his admirers' fervent shouts of 'Long Live Dvořák!' He discovered that he had been tricked into being present at the morning National Theatre meeting and the evening Artistic Circle concert and banquet arranged to honour him on November 20th, but expressed the opinion that he would in all probability survive them. Little more than a month later Otilie presented him with a grandson.

Having at last secured a libretto on the subject of *Armida* from the distinguished poet Vrchlický, after an interval of fifteen months and for the last time Dvořák turned to the composition of a major work. His opera was completed towards the end of August 1903, and preparations for its production were put in hand almost immediately. This time the composer met with misfortune, for the rehearsals did not go at all smoothly, and he was dissatisfied. He attended the first performance on March 25th. It must have been quite clear to him that the production was a failure, but he was obliged to leave early because of a pain in his side.

This was the first clear sign of Dvořák's final illness. Five days later, however, he was well enough to go out. He went to the Franz Josef station to look at the trains, but unluckily caught a chill. By April 5th his condition was serious enough for his doctor, Professor Hnátek, to call in a colleague for a second opinion, and a fortnight later the composer's condition had deteriorated considerably. It seems clear that he was suffering from generalised arterial degeneration with some involvement of the kidneys, but if there were any subsidiary contributory causes for his serious physical condition these did not emerge with any clarity at the time.²⁰ On May Day, a traditionally festive day, Dvořák was feeling decidedly better, so that his doctor permitted him to join the family for lunch, he enjoyed his soup, sitting in his

customary place at the head of the table, but almost immediately after that he felt ill again, and had to be helped back to bed. Before the doctor arrived he had expired.

The funeral service took place on May 5th at the church of St. Salvator. While the Introit of Dvořák's *Requiem* was being performed from the colonnade at the top of the steps of the National Theatre the cortege paused, and then it proceeded on its way to the Vyšehrad burial ground, the historic and legendary site high above the Vltava where many famous Czechs of modern times are laid to rest. Zdeněk Knittl, the administrative head of the Conservatory, pronounced the funeral oration. At the memorial service held two days later at the Týn church, Mozart's *Requiem* was sung. Warm tributes to the memory of the great and much loved Czech musician poured in from his friends and admirers in many parts of the world.

NOTES

1 At that time, in addition to his organist's salary of 126 gulden, he was earning 60 gulden a month by private teaching. The prize was worth about £ 40.

2 According to the article that Hanslick wrote on Dvořák for the *Neue Freie Presse* (Vol. XVIII, New Series, pp. 58-59, 1880) 'It was not until Brahms had been summoned by Herr Stremayr, the Minister, to replace Herbeck that the recognition of Dvořák's talent took the necessary practical turn.' Since Brahms in writing to Simrock (12. XII. 1877) stated: 'In connection with the State Stipend, I have for several years been delighted with the works of A. D...', it may be presumed that he was then serving for his third year, having been appointed in 1875. Hanslick's statement appears to refute Šourek's view that Brahms was a member of the jury when Dvořák made his first application.

3 Letter of 22. VIII. 1885. The Dvořák-Simrock correspondence has been published by Altmann and Šourek; see Select Bibliography, II.

4 10. IX. 1885.

5 *The Heirs of the White Mountain*.

6 Letter from London, 18. X. 1886.

7 Letter to Bohumil Fiedler, 9. I. 1886.

8 Burghauser informs me that Simrock paid 2,000 marks for the D major symphony, and that for the F major symphony, together with opp. 77-8I collectively, Dvořák received 6,000 marks. It seems probable that the composer did not value his E minor symphony nearly as highly as the one in D minor, for he sold it to Simrock for the same amount as the D major symphony, one-third the price of the D minor, even though it had been far more successful.

9 Mrs. Thurber wrote on Nov. 20th: 'Will you kindly mail me yr. contract with the alterations you desired "as I should like to have your signature as soon as possible.' Her letters to the composer are in the possession of Dvořák's heirs.

10 Alfred Littleton. His father died in 1888.

11 Reprinted in *The Musical Standard*, 22. X. 1892.

12 On March 17th, 1894, she wrote to him as follows: 'You doubtless know that owing to the hard times everyone has had more or less difficulty to meet their obligations. This explains the delay in the prompt payment of your salary this season. I can give you a note payable October 15th for \$7,500 "with interest at six per cent the balance due you I will try to give you before sailing. I will be able to give you some money next week.' And on April 21st: 'I think your answer is rather unkind. We will not discuss the contract until the settlement is made "\$3,750.'

13 In a letter to Mrs. Thurber dated 5. IV. 1894 he said: 't[h]ough I personally care very little for worldly things, I cannot see my wife and children in trouble', and he even threatened to 'publish my situation to the world' if he was not given his salary according to the terms of his contract. We can detect the hand of his wife in this, but it is almost inconceivable that Dvořák would ever have carried out such a threat.

14 Šourek was under the impression that he returned to Europe without having signed this second contract, but this is not so. The date of signing has been established by Dr. Robert Aborn, who has found the contract, and to whom I am indebted for this information.

15 Her message of October 9th reads: 'Cabled 3,750 dollars pay other half on arrival.' The letters and cables from which the above quotations have been taken are in the possession of Dvořák's heirs, who have kindly given me permission to use them. This correspondence is published more fully in my article 'Neznámé dopisy Antonína Dvořáka' in *Hudební rozhledy* XVIII, 4, Prague 1965.

16 A comprehensive exposition of his views appeared in his article 'Music in America', published in *Harper's Magazine*, 1895.

17 Letter from Mrs. Thurber to Dvořák, 18. VII. 95.

18 Letter to J. Geisler, 18. III. 1896. He had evening meals presumably with Alfred Littleton.

19 Ludmila Wechte, *Culture Forum*, VI, 38. New York, 1923.

20 In the light of the evidence we have it does not appear to be certain that Dvořák was suffering from uraemia. Otakar Dvořák attributed his father's deterioration on April 18th to an attack of influenza, but it is possible there may have been some other cause. I offer this explanation after seeking the advice of an eminent authority on vascular disease.

In: Clapham, John. *Antonín Dvořák. Musician and Craftsman*. Faber and Faber, Ltd. London.

