

Chandos

CHAN 8510

# DVOŘÁK

## SYMPHONY No. 9 in E minor Op.95

'From the New World' (44:46)

- 1 I Adagio — Allegro molto (12:25)
- 2 II Largo — un poco più mosso — Largo (13:01)
- 3 III Scherzo: Molto vivace (7:51)
- 4 IV Allegro con fuoco (11:12)
- 5 MY HOME, Overture Op.62 (9:25)

SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Leader, Edwin Paling

conducted by NEEME JÄRVI

TT = 54:15 DDD

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DIGITAL

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*in E minor Op.95*

*"From the New World"*

**MY HOME**

*Overture Op.62*

SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

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This recording was made with financial support from  
The Scottish Mutual Assurance Society

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When Dvořák first conducted his *Symphony From the New World* for the audience which knew him best — in Prague on 13 October, 1894 — he included the Overture *My Home* in the same concert. He had conducted *My Home* in America, too, and he was obviously very attached to it. Outside Czechoslovakia, however, it has achieved nothing like the popularity or reputation of his other overtures: perhaps because it is based on a melody which was later incorporated in the Czech national anthem, it has come to be considered as suitable for domestic consumption only.

But it is not that kind of work. It originated as the overture to a play about the adventurous life of Josef Kajetan Tyl, the Czech actor and playwright now best remembered for the song *Where is my Home?* (*Kde domov můj?*) for which he wrote the words and Frantisek Skroup wrote the music. The song was popular in Dvořák's lifetime but there was no way that he could have known in 1882, when he was writing the incidental music for *Josef Kajetan Tyl*, that *Where is my Home?* would be drafted into national service a generation later. He certainly doesn't treat it like a national anthem.

The overture is actually based on two tunes, Skroup's *Where is my Home?* and a Czech folksong, *In the Farmyard*. In the *Andante maestoso* introduction Dvořák alludes to various salient characteristics of the melodies — *In the Farmyard* first, then *Where is my Home?* on woodwind over pizzicato strings — without committing himself to a definitive version of either. Indeed, he devotes such skill and imagination to varying the thematic material that it would be impossible to say which out of so many is the definitive version. *In the Farmyard* sounds best, perhaps, disguised as a Slavonic dance, when it so vigorously bounces in as the first subject of the *Allegro vivace*. *Where is my Home?* makes a delightfully happy entry as second subject, on clarinet urged on by the strings, and avoids all hint of solemnity throughout the development. Its future status is anticipated only in the briskly heroic treatment it receives in the coda.

In spite of all the controversy about whether the melodic material of the *New World* Symphony is mainly American or mainly Czech — whether it derives from Negro or Indian sources on the one hand or from Dvořák's native Bohemia on the other — what really matters is what the composer thought he was doing.

About that there should be no controversy. In an interview in the *New York Herald* on 15 December, 1893 (the day before the first performance) Dvořák quite clearly says that, having studied a number of American Indian melodies, he tried to reproduce their spirit in his new symphony: 'I have not actually used any of the melodies. I have simply written original themes embodying the peculiarities of the Indian music and, using these themes as subjects, have developed them with all the resources of modern rhythms, harmony, counterpoint and orchestral colour.' As the highly paid titular head of the National Conservatory in New York, he had set himself the task of demonstrating to his pupils how they could build a distinctively American symphonic tradition on the basis of their national music. Just as he had turned to the 'half forgotten tunes of the Bohemian peasants' for inspiration, they should draw on Negro or Indian melody.

As far as Dvořák was concerned, there was no practical difference between Negro and Indian music, and he rather curiously compared them both to the music of Scotland. Clearly, he had identified no more in them than the characteristics common to both kinds of folksong, Bohemian included. On the other hand, if he *thought* he was creating American melody — Indian melody, indeed, in those parts of the work inspired by Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* — it scarcely matters if Czech ethnomusicologists can claim everything he wrote as Bohemian. They could also claim, incidentally, that he had first read *Hiawatha* in a Czech translation thirty years earlier and that he had long had the intention of setting it to music in some way. But, as Dvořák said, 'It would never have been written 'so' if I had never seen America.'

The two movements which Dvořák specifically mentioned as being inspired by *Hiawatha* are the *Largo* and the *Scherzo*. But, if they are American in spirit, so is the first movement, not least the theme which is anticipated by the horns in the *Adagio* introduction and which makes a dramatic entry in E minor (on the same instruments) as the first subject of the *Allegro molto*. It has most of the characteristics of the other American tunes in the work, including the basic tendency to rise up and fall back in alternate phrases. The two second-subject themes — the busy flute and oboe melody in G minor and the nostalgic flute solo in G major with its unmistakable echo of the Negro spiritual — are of the same kind. The whole point of the development, moreover, is to emphasise the kinship of the three themes.

Dvořák's belief that there is no practical difference between Negro and Indian music is best demonstrated by the lovely cor anglais melody at the beginning of the slow movement. Introduced by an inspired sequence of wind chords leading from E to D flat major, it sets the scene of an Indian funeral in spite of its obvious Negro spiritual affiliations. There is a possibly deeper sadness in the quicker middle section, where the key changes to C sharp minor for the entry of the flute and oboe in passionate unison and the lament of the clarinets over pizzicato basses. The cor anglais melody returns by way of an excited rustic piping in C sharp major and a dramatic intrusion from the first movement in the minor.

The *Scherzo*, according to Dvořák, 'was suggested by the scene at the feast in *Hiawatha* where the Indians dance.' Interestingly, however, although the brilliantly articulated E minor dance and the more relaxed E major woodwind song of the outer sections fulfil Dvořák's American requirements, the C major middle section does not: it is a beautifully scored memory of Bohemian country life.

Having made its presence felt in the *Scherzo* as well as the *Largo*, the first subject of the first movement also has an important role to play in the

finale. Wound up by the strings, the *Allegro con fuoco* projects its own material first — an E minor march on horns and trumpets, a frenzied dance on violins, and a more reflective episode on clarinet which is swept away by a theme so robust in its G major harmonies that the horns repeatedly have to utter a stern reminder of the E minor march. Over an ostinato derived from the march theme, woodwind and strings simultaneously echo fragments of the *Adagio* and the *Scherzo*, apparently to clear the way for the climactic entry of the first subject of the first movement. The resulting conflict between that theme and the E minor march provokes such a crisis that the recapitulation seems only a remote issue until the conflict can be resolved in the coda.

GERALD LARNER

**The Scottish National Orchestra** became a full-time body serving the whole of Scotland in 1950, although its history (as the Scottish Orchestra) dates back to 1891. Under Karl Rankl, Hans Swarowsky and, more recently, Sir Alexander Gibson, the SNO has achieved remarkable international prestige, acknowledged in 1978 with a grant of patronage by Her Majesty the Queen.

In addition to making around 150 appearances each year in Scotland, the SNO appears regularly at many of the British festivals, including the London Proms and the Edinburgh Festival. Touring commitments have included many cities in the UK, several European trips and two visits to North America.

The SNO has built up a considerable reputation as a recording orchestra and recently won the Gramophone Award for the best orchestral recording of 1985 for its recording of Prokofiev's Symphony No. 6 with Neeme Järvi. The SNO played a major role in the first years of Scottish Opera and its involvement with contemporary music includes the triennial festival Musica Nova.

**Neeme Järvi** took up his appointment as Musical Director and Principal Conductor of the Scottish National Orchestra in August 1984, since when both he and the orchestra have received great critical acclaim. Born in Tallinn, Estonia, in 1937, he graduated from Tallinn Music School with degrees in percussion and choral conducting before continuing his studies at the Leningrad State Conservatory. In 1963 he became Director of the Estonian Radio and Television Orchestra and began his 13-year tenure as Chief Conductor of the Opera Theatre Estonia.

He took up residence in North America in 1980 and almost immediately made his début with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. He now makes frequent appearances with the San Francisco, Toronto, Montreal and Chicago Symphony Orchestras and has also appeared with the Philadelphia, Boston and Los Angeles Symphony Orchestras. His engagements at the Metropolitan Opera have included *Eugene Onegin* and a new production of Mussorgsky's *Khovantschina*. He works frequently in Europe — at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and with German and Scandinavian Orchestras — and is Chief Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in Sweden.

His extensive recordings with the SNO on Chandos include the complete Prokofiev Symphonies, a set of 6 Opera Suites by Rimsky-Korsakov and Scriabin's Symphony No. 2. This recording is one of a complete cycle of Dvorák's Symphonies with Symphonic Poems, due for completion in 1988.

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# DVOŘÁK



Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

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