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STEREO

MONO VIC-1310

DVOŘÁK


VICTROLA®

Symphony No. 7 in D Minor, Op. 70 (Old No. 2)
Monteux/London Symphony Orchestra



Dvořák—SYMPHONY No. 7 IN D MINOR, Op. 70 (Old No. 2)

Pierre Monteux/London Symphony Orchestra

*"Under Monteux's probing baton...
the work emerges luminous and brimming with life.
A record not to be missed."*

—THE NEW YORK TIMES

Of the nine symphonies Dvořák composed, only five were published during his lifetime; the other four remained more or less forgotten until recent times. With the assimilation and publication of the complete works of Dvořák, however, the nine symphonies have been numbered in the order of their composition. Thus the familiar Symphony No. 5, "From the New World," has become Symphony No. 9, and Symphony No. 2 in D Minor, the second of Dvořák's to be published, has become Symphony No. 7.

The Seventh Symphony was begun in December 1884 and finished in March 1885. It bears the inscription "Composed for the Philharmonic Society in London" and was given its première by this orchestra on April 22, 1885, with the composer conducting. Like most of Dvořák's music, the symphony glows with incandescent passion, sings with appealing melody, moves with vitality and is invested with a spirit that is touched with nobility and moved by sincerity and conviction. The audience at the first performance thought so and made their response emphatic. "The enthusiasm," said the London Athenaeum, "was such as is rarely seen at a Philharmonic concert." The American première, in New York in January 1886, was equally successful. Dvořák evidently thought well of the work too, for he gently but firmly demanded—and received—from his publisher 6,000 marks instead of his customary 3,000.

The Slavonic flavor is always discernible in

Dvořák's music, and here it is pronounced—in the bright orchestral colors, in the vigorous and often syncopated rhythms, in the emotional tension. Laughter and tears are never very far apart either in his works, and the D Minor Symphony, while it generally moves in an atmosphere of rather deep introspection, has its contrasts of emotions.

Each of the four movements has a gracious symmetry of form which arises in part from the composer's reminding us of thematic material that has gone before, often ending a movement with a direct reference to the phrases that began it.

The first movement is rather formal in contour, but within the framework of the sonata form the irrepressible Dvořák manages a considerable degree of freedom. Violas and cellos present the first theme; the idea is expanded first by the clarinets and then by other instruments until the orchestra reaches a climax. A short period of restraint brings us to the second theme, which is heard first in the flute and clarinet. Both subjects are extensively developed and then restated.

The second movement, centering around a courtly, songlike melody, is noteworthy for a wealth and beauty of melodic invention and a richness of orchestration. The scherzo is a vigorously jolly one; the traditional three-part form is observed, with strings in control of the first section and the expressive trio given its thematic basis primarily by woodwinds.

The finale is an ingratiating example of a quality that is always present in Dvořák's music, which can be described, perhaps, as dynamism, or the power of motion. It is not necessarily associated with the sonorous powers of the orchestra but rather with an indefinable and inexplicable feeling of life and movement which rhythms can communicate independently of the intensity of sound. As the noted critic Sir Donald Francis Tovey has written, this music "is admirably endowed with that quality which is the rarest of all in post-classical finales—the power of movement . . . Dvořák had the classical secret of movement, which is not a power that can be obtained at the expense of higher qualities, for it is one of the highest." The first idea of the principal theme is stated immediately by the clarinet, French horn and cellos; the idea is expanded, gradually building to a full orchestral climax. The second idea of the theme is presented by the strings alone and is characterized by a repeated-note figure and marchlike rhythm. The second theme, a flowing, folklike melody, is heard first from the cellos and then transferred to the brighter instruments, notably flutes and oboes. The material is developed quite extensively, and then there is a restatement of the themes. It is a movement with a particular brilliance, a brilliance achieved by the shrewd orchestration and natural thematic development that we have come to associate with the music of the great Czech composer.

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