

then we have a *sparcika*, a Czech dance with alternating slow and fast sections in 4-8. No. 6 is a *polonaise*, exuding a character more pastoral than stately. The penultimate piece is a magnificently brilliant *kolo*, more or less the Serbian counterpart to the fiery Bohemian *furiant*s heard in Book I. Instead of saving the exultant *kolo* for the end of the sequence, Dvorak chose to conclude with a *sousedská*. He had used it twice in the Op. 46 set, but this final dance is more stylized: the effect throughout can only be called dreamlike, and the end is on a note of rarified intimacy scarcely hinted at in any of the preceding numbers, as if Dvořák had determined that simple warmth of heart was the impression he wanted to linger with the listener.

Notes by Christopher Todd Landor

Antal Doráti (1906-88) was born in Budapest, where his father Alexander Doráti was a violinist with the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra and his mother Margit Kunwald was a piano teacher. He studied at the Franz Liszt Academy with Zoltán Kodály and Leo Weiner for composition and Béla Bartók for piano. His links with Bartók continued for many years: he conducted the world premiere of Bartók's Viola Concerto in 1949, with William Primrose as the soloist.

He made his conducting debut in 1924 with the Budapest Royal Opera and often specialized in music of central European composers. As well as composing original works, he compiled and arranged pieces by Johann Strauss II for *Graduation Ball*, as well as Jacques Offenbach's *La belle Hélène* and *Bluebeard*, and Modest Mussorgsky's *The Fair at Sorochyntsi*.

He became a US citizen in 1947. His autobiography, *Notes of Seven Decades*, was published in 1979. In 1983, Queen Elizabeth II made Doráti an honorary *Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire* (KBE). This entitled him to use the post-nominal letters KBE, but not to style himself "Sir Antal Doráti". His wife was Ilse von Alpenheim, an Austrian pianist who also recorded for Vox. Doráti died at the age of 82 in Gerzensee, Switzerland.

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Project Co-ordinator: Robin Vaughan (musicalmerit@blueyonder.co.uk)

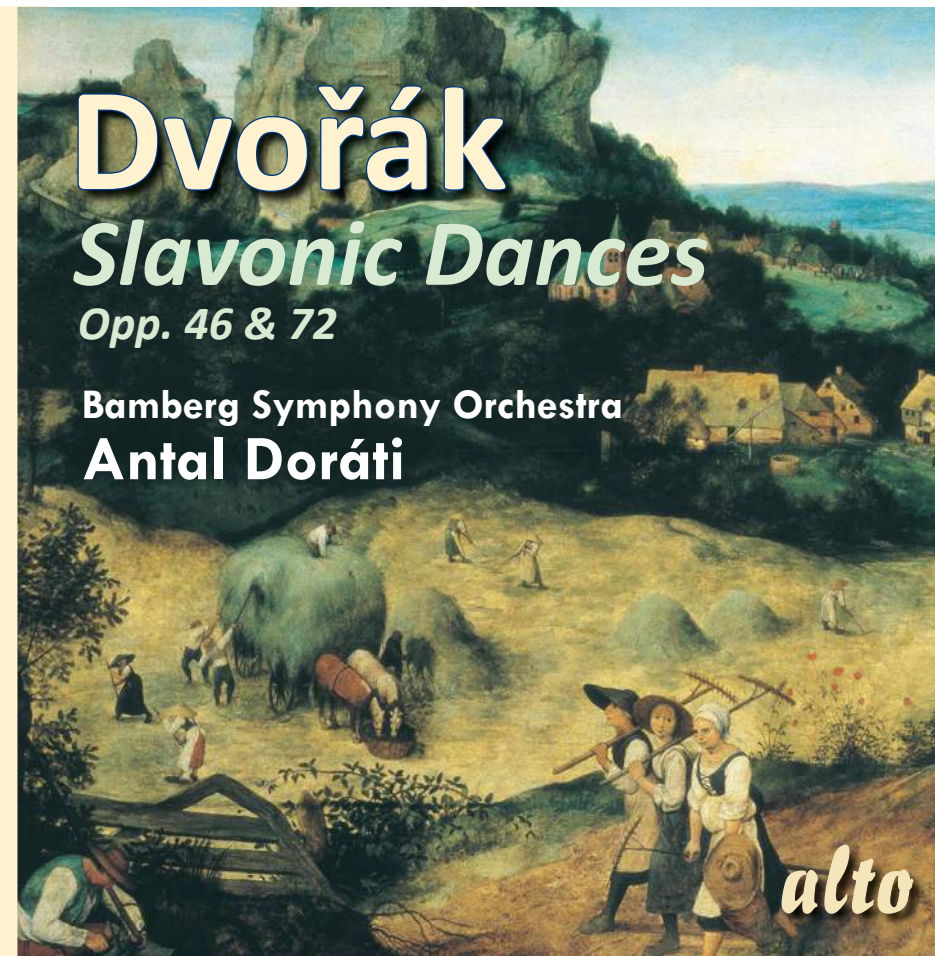
Dvořák: Slavonic Dances Opp. 46 & 72
Bamberg Symphony Orchestra
Antal Doráti

[1]	Slavonic Dance No. 1 in C major, Op. 46, No. 1	3:42
[2]	Slavonic Dance No. 2 in E minor, Op. 46, No. 2	4:52
[3]	Slavonic Dance No. 3 in A flat major, Op. 46, No. 3	4:35
[4]	Slavonic Dance No. 4 in F major, Op. 46, No. 4	7:35
[5]	Slavonic Dance No. 5 in A major, Op. 46, No. 5	3:18
[6]	Slavonic Dance No. 6 in D major, Op. 46, No. 6	4:18
[7]	Slavonic Dance No. 7 in C minor, Op. 46, No. 7	3:19
[8]	Slavonic Dance No. 8 in G minor, Op. 46, No. 8	3:43
[9]	Slavonic Dance No. 9 in B major, Op. 72, No. 1	3:55
[10]	Slavonic Dance No. 10 in E minor, Op. 72, No. 2	5:07
[11]	Slavonic Dance No. 11 in F major, Op. 72, No. 3	2:55
[12]	Slavonic Dance No. 12 in D flat major, Op. 72, No. 4	5:03
[13]	Slavonic Dance No. 13 in B flat minor, Op. 72, No. 5	2:12
[14]	Slavonic Dance No. 14 in B flat major, Op. 72, No. 6	3:32
[15]	Slavonic Dance No. 15 in C major, Op. 72, No. 7	3:18
[16]	Slavonic Dance No. 16 in A flat major, Op. 72, No. 8	6:09

TOTAL TIME 67:40

Recorded 1974/5 Germany by Vox Music Group

Re-mastered for **alto** by Paul Arden-Taylor (www.dinmore-records.co.uk)



Johannes Brahms, who was godfather to a number of Dvořák's works, was rather directly responsible for the creations of the ones that first brought the Bohemian master to the attention of the world — the eight *Slavonic Dances* of *Dvořák's Op. 46*. Dvořák had received his first Austrian State Grant in 1875 (Bohemia then being part of the Austrian empire); in applying for a renewal two years later, he submitted his Moravian Duets (Op. 32), settings of Moravian folk poetry for soprano, alto and piano. Brahms, a member of the commission constituted to pass on grant applications, was so impressed with the duets that he got Dvořák together with his publisher, Fritz Simrock of Berlin, who not only brought out the *Moravian Duets* at once, but immediately asked Dvořák for more material, thus beginning a relationship which, with a hitch or two a decade or so later, was to continue to the end of Dvořák's life.

One of Simrock's great successes with Brahms' compositions — in fact, the work that scored Brahms' big breakthrough in terms of general popularity — had been the first volume of *Hungarian Dances*, produced in 1869. Simrock was after Brahms for another volume, which was not to materialize until 1880; in the meantime, he suggested to his new client Dvořák that he compose a similar set of national dances, to be written, like those of Brahms, for piano, four hands, but based on the dance forms of his own country. Dvořák was then interested in making his name with weightier offerings, but he recognized the practicality of Simrock's suggestion, not only in terms of his benefit, but as an opportunity to acquaint a broad public with the Czech spirit in music.

The first book of Slavonic Dances, comprising eight numbers in varied moods, was written quickly, between March 18 and May 7, 1878 (which latter date, by a happy coincidence, was Brahms' 45th birthday), and orchestrated in August of the same year. The original piano-duet versions of the dances were published that month, and quickly made a small fortune for Simrock, who had paid Dvořák all of 300 (old) marks for them. Adolf Cech conducted the first performance of the orchestral version of the entire set on May 16, 1879, in Prague, and from that date forward these enchanting dances and their composer were assured the warmest welcome everywhere. By 1886, when Dvořák got round to writing his *second book of Slavonic Dances*, he was himself 45, and one of the most beloved and respected composers of his time, having just completed the masterly *Symphony No. 7 in D minor* (Op. 70) on commission from the Philharmonic Society of London, the same organization that had commissioned Beethoven's masterwork in the same key (the *Ninth Symphony*) some six decades earlier.

It must be noted that there is an important basic difference between the *Hungarian Dances* of Brahms and the *Slavonic Dances* of Dvořák. Brahms, dealing with a colorful "exotic" strain, offered his dances as "arrangements," advising Simrock that they were "innocent Gypsy children, whom I did not beget, but merely brought up with bread and milk," all of them being settings of actual folk melodies. Dvořák, however, in dealing with his own native idiom, did not use a single bar of actual folk-music in his *Slavonic Dances*, but created his own themes in the style of folk music; that there has been any misunderstanding on this point only attests to his success in capturing the authentic flavor of the folk spirit entirely through his own imagination.

The *Slavonic Dances*, too, are altogether more ambitious in their proportions than the *Hungarian Dances*. Brahms sought to do no more than present his engaging Magyar discoveries in the form of attractive miniatures; Dvořák approached the writing of his *Slavonic Dances* with a broader objective in mind, so that each of them, especially in the orchestral version, may well strike the listener as a concise rhapsody or tone poem in the form of an idealization of the respective dance form. (This is especially true of the Op. 72 set.) It is significant that Dvorak did not title these works *Czech Dances* or *Bohemian Dances*, for, while the flavor of the music is thoroughly Czech (in the sense that it is thoroughly Dvořák), he included in these cycles dance forms native to Poland, the Ukraine, Serbia and other Slavonic regions. All but seven of the eight dances in Op. 46, however, do represent Czech forms. (However, only three of the dances in Op. 72 are Bohemian in character, the other five representing forms from the nations listed above.)

The series begins in jubilant spirit with a *furiant*, a dance "fiery and impulsive in character," according to *Grove's*, which source advises further than the dance's "Czech name has no etymological connection with 'fury.'" The second dance is a *dumka*, originally a Ukrainian form, but one which had been used to good advantage by composers from various Slavic countries: Dvořák constructed the entirety of his last piano trio (E minor, Op. 90) in the form of a chain of *dumky*, and one of Tchaikovsky's better-known piano works is his *Dumka*, Op. 59. Basically, the *dumka* is a plaintive slow dance with a more animated middle section.

Dance No. 3 is a sunny polka, relying more on its lyrical quality than on sheer vigor for its charm. No. 4 is a *sousedská*, a waltz-like form related to the Austrian *Ländler*, this one is marked *Tempo di menuetto*, but has an unmistakably outdoor character. The *skočná*, represented by No. 5, is a

jumping — or hop-and-step — dance, no less energetic than the *furiant*, but more playful; this is the form used by Smetana for the Dance of the Comedians in *The Bartered Bride*.

The last three dances of Book I are in forms already introduced: No. 6 is another *sousedská*, and one of the most ingratiating pieces in either series; No. 7 in another *skočná*, and No. 8 is another *furiant*, even more fiery and abandoned than the first.

The *Op.72 dances*, while continuing the general tenor of those in the earlier set, differ from them somewhat by virtue of their greater emotional depth and expansiveness: there is more of what may reasonably be called poetry in this later set. That this should be, of course, need hardly surprise us if we consider some of the works Dvořák produced during the eight years between these two books of dances — the *Symphonies Nos. 6 in D major* (Op. 60) and *7 in D minor* (Op. 70), the *Violin Concerto* (Op. 53), the *Scherzo capriccioso* (Op. 66), the Heyduk Songs of Op. 55, the *Piano Trio in F minor* (Op. 65), the *String Sextet* (Op. 48), the *String Quartets in E-flat* (Op. 51) and *C major* (Op. 61), and still others in various categories.

As a composer, Dvořák was more interested in these larger and more serious forms, and he did dodge Simrock's request for a sequel to Op. 46 for the better part of a decade. The publisher's renewed urging came at about the time Dvorak was completing his oratorio *Saint Ludmilla*, and he at first refused on the grounds that he could not possibly make so abrupt a change in mood as that required to switch from the exalted, consecrational frame of the oratorio to a series of "entertainment pieces." The effort of completing the oratorio, however, left him so drained that he then actually welcomed the commission as a means of restorative relaxation (and, as noted above, he extracted a decent fee from Simrock this time).

The eight dances of Op. 72, like those of Op. 46, were originally composed for piano duet and then orchestrated. This time Dvořák worked with even greater speed: the keyboard version of Book II was written between June 4 and July 9, 1886, and they were orchestrated at once. Dvořák's love for the Czech soil and the music of the farms and villages had, if anything, only deepened, as had his imagination and his melodic inventiveness. The sequence begins with an *odzemek*, a vigorous Slovak dance in 2-4, and continues with a *dumka* which is one of the best-loved components of either book. Op. 72, No. 3 is a *skočná*, its successor a *dumka* with a faintly elegiac cast, and