



DVOŘÁK

Spirit of Bohemia

String Quartet No. 4 • String Sextet • Polonaise

Fine Arts Quartet

Ralph Evans, Violin • Efim Boico, Violin
Gil Sharon, Viola • Niklas Schmidt, Cello

Anna Kreetta Gribajcevic, Viola
Jens Peter Maintz, Cello • Stepan Simonian, Piano

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

String Quartet No. 4 • String Sextet in A major • Polonaise in A major

Antonín Dvořák was born in 1841, the son of a butcher and innkeeper in the village of Nelahozeves, near Kralupy in Bohemia, and some 40 miles north of Prague. It was natural that he should at first have been expected to follow the family trade, as the eldest son. His musical abilities, however, soon became apparent and were encouraged by his father, who in later years abandoned his original trade, to earn something of a living as a zither player. After primary schooling he was sent to lodge with an uncle in Zlonice and was there able to acquire the necessary knowledge of German and improve his abilities as a musician, hitherto acquired at home in the village band and in church. Further study of German and of music at Kamenice, a town in northern Bohemia, led to his admission in 1857 to the Prague Organ School, where he studied for the following two years.

On leaving the Organ School, Dvořák earned his living as a viola player in a band under the direction of Karel Komzák, an ensemble that was to form the nucleus of the Czech Provisional Theatre Orchestra, established in 1862. Four years later Smetana was appointed conductor at the theatre, where his operas *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia* and *The Bartered Bride* had already been performed. It was not until 1871 that Dvořák resigned from the orchestra, devoting himself more fully to composition, as his music began to attract favourable local attention. In 1873 he married a singer from the chorus of the theatre and in 1874 became organist of the church of St Adalbert. During this period he continued to support himself by private teaching, while busy on a series of compositions that gradually became known to a wider circle.

Further recognition came to Dvořák in 1874, when his application for an Austrian government award brought his music to the attention of Brahms and the critic Eduard Hanslick in Vienna. The granting of this award for five consecutive years was of material assistance. It was through this contact that, impressed by Dvořák's *Moravian Duets* for soprano and contralto, entered for the

award of 1877, Brahms was able to arrange for their publication by Simrock, who commissioned a further work, *Slavonic Dances*, for piano duet. The success of these publications introduced Dvořák's music to a much wider public, for which it held some exotic appeal. As his reputation grew, there were visits to Germany and to England, where he was always received with greater enthusiasm than might initially have been accorded a Czech composer in Vienna.

In 1883 Dvořák had rejected a tempting proposal that he should write a German opera for Vienna. At home he continued to contribute to Czech operatic repertoire, an important element in re-establishing national musical identity. The invitation to take up a position in New York was another matter. In 1891 he had become professor of composition at Prague Conservatory and in the summer of the same year he was invited to become director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. With the backing of Jeannette Thurber and her husband, this institution was intended to foster American music, hitherto dominated by musicians from Europe or largely trained there. Whatever the ultimate success or failure of the venture, Dvořák's contribution was seen as that of providing a blueprint for American national music, following the example of Czech national music, which owed so much to him. The musical results of Dvořák's time in America must lie chiefly in his own music, notably in his *Symphony 'From the New World'*, his *'American' Quartet* and *'American' Quintet* and *Violin Sonatina*, works that rely strongly on the European tradition that he had inherited, while making use of melodies and rhythms that might be associated in one way or another with America. By 1895 Dvořák was home for good, resuming work at the Prague Conservatory, of which he became director in 1901. His final works included a series of symphonic poems and two more operas, to add to the nine he had already composed. He died in Prague in 1904.

Dvořák's *String Quartet in E minor, B.19* was written probably in 1870, to be rejected by the composer, who

found further use for the *Andante religioso* at its heart in his *Nocturne, Op. 40* for string orchestra, and in his *String Quintet, Op. 77*. In other respects the *Quartet in E minor* was intended to share the fate of two other early quartets, surviving, in spite of the composer, in parts to be first published in 1968. The E minor work is in three sections, the first an *Allegro*, leading to the *Andante religioso*, with its nocturnal shades, followed by a final *Allegro con brio*. The outer sections make considerable use of the higher registers of the first violin in writing that some have found over-Wagnerian. The *Andante religioso* makes a return in the third section, leading to a brief final *Allegro vivace* and concluding *Presto*.

The *String Sextet in A major, Op. 48* was written between 14 and 27 May 1878 and was given a private performance by the violinist Joseph Joachim and his colleagues on 19 July 1879, allowing the composer to hear the work. The first public performance, again with the Joachim Quartet and two additional players, was given in Berlin on 9 November, winning immediate and wide approval. The work, imbued with the spirit of Bohemia, is scored for two violins, two violas and two cellos. The first movement is in sonata-allegro form, its exposition repeated before the exploration of the thematic material in

the central development. The two inner movements are overtly Czech in character and in title, a *Dumka* ('Elegy'), tinged with the occasional necessary melancholy, and an energetic *Furiant*. The work ends with a theme and variations, the theme itself announced without the violins, which make their entry in the first variation, marked *Poco più mosso*. The rapid *Scherzando* second variation leads to a third, *Meno mosso*, its melody given to the first cello. A sinuous fourth and a rapidly accompanied fifth lead to an emphatic *Stretta* and finally to a concluding *Presto*.

Dvořák wrote his *Polonaise in A major, B. 94* for the Czech cellist Alois Neruda with whom he gave the first performance in Turnov on 29 June 1879. Neruda, a member of a prolific musical family, studied at Prague Conservatory and started his career in Hungary, eventually returning to Prague as a member of the National Orchestra. The *Polonaise*, a piece demanding some degree of virtuosity from the cellist, was provided for Neruda to play at a concert of compositions by Dvořák, presenting his *Piano Trio in G minor* with the violinist Ferdinand Lachner. The *Polonaise* was lost, to be rediscovered and published in 1925.

Keith Anderson

Anna Kreetta Gribajcevic



Photo: Torsten Kollmer

Finnish violist Anna Kreetta Gribajcevic studied at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and in Germany (Saarbrücken and Berlin) with Diemut Poppen and Kim Kashkashian. Her chamber music mentors include Ralf Gothóni and the Amadeus Quartet. She has performed extensively as a soloist with orchestras such as the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Symphoniker Hamburg, Les Siècles and the Philharmonia Orchestra. A dedicated chamber musician, Gribajcevic performs at festivals worldwide, including Moritzburg Festival and the International Mendelssohn Festival in Germany, Festival Juventus in France and Naantali Music Festival in Finland. She has made several recordings for the BIS, Ondine and TYXart labels, and her recording of the Kalevi Aho *Viola Concerto*, recorded on BIS with the Chamber Orchestra of Lapland, won awards in Finland and abroad. Since 2012 Gribajcevic has been professor of viola at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg. She is also artistic leader of the chamber music festival 'Omenapuun varjossa' in Lohja, Finland. She plays a viola made by Vincenzo Postiglione (c. 1860).

Jens Peter Maintz



Photo: Nikolaj Lund

Jens Peter Maintz enjoys an outstanding reputation as a versatile soloist, highly sought-after chamber musician and committed cello teacher. He studied with David Geringas and has participated in masterclasses with Heinrich Schiff, Boris Pergamenschikow and Frans Helmerson. In 1994 he won First Prize at the ARD international Music Competition, which had previously not been awarded to a cellist for 17 years. As a soloist he has performed with conductors such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Herbert Blomstedt and Dmitrij Kitajenko, appearing with orchestras including the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Den Haag Residentz-Orchester and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. He has served as a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts since 2004, and the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía in Madrid since 2017.

Maintz has been principal cellist of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra since 2006, which he joined at the invitation of Claudio Abbado. He received an ECHO Klassik award for his solo album of works by Bach, Dutilleux and Kodály, released on Sony Classical. Jens Peter Maintz plays the 'Ex-Servais' cello made by Giovanni Grancino in 1697.

Niklas Schmidt



Cellist Niklas Schmidt began studies in Hamburg. He later worked with the Amadeus Quartet, and was a regular guest at the Gstaad Menuhin Academy. He was also a founding member of the internationally acclaimed Trio Fontenay, which recorded virtually the complete piano trio literature for the Teldec, EMI and Philips labels, with most of its recordings receiving international awards such as the Diapason d'Or and the German Record Critics' Award (for its recordings of the complete Beethoven *Trios*). Schmidt has also recorded the Beethoven *Triple Concerto* with the Philharmonia Orchestra, cello sonatas by Schubert, Strauss, and Rachmaninov, preludes by Moscheles, and most recently, all of Bach's solo cello suites. He has been a juror at international competitions in Hamburg, Melbourne, Reggio Emilia (Borciari), Vienna and Lyon, and most recently chaired the Mendelssohn Competition in Berlin. He is also director of the International Mendelssohn Festival (IMF) in Hamburg. Schmidt has been professor of violoncello and chamber music in Hamburg since 1987.

www.niklasschmidt.com

Stepan Simonian



Photo: Michael Reinicke

The recipient of the Silver Medal at the International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in Leipzig 2010, German pianist Stepan Simonian performs as a guest artist at some of the most prestigious festivals and concert venues throughout Europe, including Bachfest Leipzig; international piano festivals La Roque d'Anthéron and Piano aux Jacobins in France; the Martha Argerich Festival in Germany; Mosel Music Festival; the ProArte concert series in Hamburg; Pro Musica, Hannover; Alte Oper in Frankfurt am Main; Konzerthaus Berlin and the Prinzregententheater in Munich. He has appeared as a soloist with the Bach-Collegium Stuttgart under Helmuth Rilling, Hamburg Symphony Orchestra under Charles Dutoit, the Kirov Ballet Orchestra and Sinfonia Varsovia among many others. Simonian's performances have been broadcast on major classical stations including ARD, MDR, NDR, SWR, Hessian and Bavarian Broadcasting and Deutschlandradio Kultur in Germany, and Radio France. Since 2009 Simonian has worked as a tenure professor at his alma mater, the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg, where he lectures in solo piano performance.

www.stepansimonian.com

Fine Arts Quartet



The Fine Arts Quartet, described by the *Washington Post* as 'one of the gold-plated names in chamber music', ranks among the most distinguished ensembles in chamber music today, with an illustrious history of performing success and an extensive legacy of over 200 recorded works. Founded in Chicago in 1946, the Quartet is one of the elite few to have recorded and toured internationally for well over a half-century. Violinists Ralph Evans (prizewinner in the International Tchaikovsky Competition) and Efim Boico (former concertmaster of the Orchestre de Paris under Daniel Barenboim) have performed together since 1983. They are joined by two eminent musicians: violist Gil Sharon (founder of the Amati Ensemble), and cellist Niklas Schmidt (co-founder of Trio Fontenay). Many of the Quartet's recent releases have been selected for inclusion on GRAMMY Awards entry lists in the categories Best Classical Album and/or Best Chamber Music Performance, and have received multiple awards and distinctions, among them: *Gramophone* Award Winner and Recording of Legendary Status (*The Gramophone Classical Music Guide*), Key Recording/Top Recommendation (*Penguin Guide to Recorded Classical Music*), Editor's Choice (*Gramophone* magazine), Critic's Choice (*American Record Guide*), *BBC Music Magazine* Choice, three times Recording of the Year (*MusicWeb International*), and a GRAMMY Award for producer Steven Epstein (Fauré *Quintets* with Cristina Ortiz). The Quartet has also received the CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. Beethoven's *Fugues and Rareties* (8.574051) was released by Naxos in 2020. www.fineartsquartet.com

Antonín Dvořák's music, imbued with the spirit of Bohemia, reflects a love of his native land. His *String Sextet*, written in the distinctive style which brought him international fame, was an immediate success at its premiere. Composed just eight years earlier, his *String Quartet No. 4*, unpublished until 1968, features pioneering, wild outer movements, highly unusual for the time, which foreshadowed the modernist innovations of composers decades later. A moving *Andante religioso*, which Dvořák made use of in future works, lies at its heart. The *Polonaise* exploits both the soulful and virtuoso character of the cello. Volumes 1–8 are also available.

Antonín
DVOŘÁK
(1841–1904)

String Quartet No. 4 in E minor, B. 19 (c. 1870) 35:57

- 1 I. Assai con moto ed energico 14:50**
- 2 II. Andante religioso 9:13**
- 3 III. Allegro con brio 11:54**

String Sextet in A major, Op. 48, B. 80 (1878) 33:58

- 4 I. Allegro moderato 13:55**
- 5 II. Dumka: Poco allegretto 7:03**
- 6 III. Furiant: Presto 4:27**
- 7 IV. Finale: Tema con variazioni 8:24**
- 8 Polonaise in A major, B. 94 (1879) 8:21**

Fine Arts Quartet

Ralph Evans, Violin I 1–7 • Efim Boico, Violin II 1–7

Gil Sharon, Viola 1–3, Viola I 4–7 • Niklas Schmidt, Cello 1–3 8, Cello I 4–7

Anna Kreetta Gribajcevic, Viola II 4–7

Jens Peter Maintz, Cello II 4–7 • Stepan Simonian, Piano 8

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