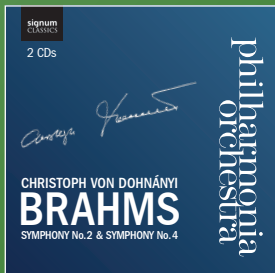


SignumClassics

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

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SIGCD132

CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI
BRAHMS
SYMPHONY No.2 & SYMPHONY No.4

SIGCD133

SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS
SCHUBERT
SYMPHONY No.9



Charles Mackerras

SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS
DVOŘÁK
SYMPHONY No.7 & SYMPHONY No.8

DVOŘÁK

SYMPHONY No.7 & SYMPHONY No.8

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Symphony No. 7

1	Allegro maestoso	10.25
2	Poco adagio	9.42
3	Scherzo: Vivace	7.31
4	Finale: Allegro	9.18

Symphony No. 8

5	Allegro con brio	10.00
6	Adagio	10.28
7	Allegretto grazioso	6.08
8	Allegro ma non troppo	10.15
	Total timings	73.52

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA
SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS CONDUCTOR

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DVOŘÁK

SYMPHONY No.7
SYMPHONY No.8

As regards the new compositions, I should like ... to recommend the big dramatic overture 'The Hussite' and the *Scherzo capriccioso*, both for large orchestra. I presented both works last year at St. James's Hall and the Crystal Palace in London and now I am writing for the Philharmonic Society in London a new symphony which I must conduct myself on April 22nd of this year.

Dvořák's letter to the great conductor, Hans Richter was written in March 1885 as he was putting the finishing touches to perhaps his finest, if not his most famous, symphony – No.7 in D minor, Op. 70. The first of Dvořák's nine visits to England had taken place exactly one year previously and he had been tremendously excited by the reception of his Sixth Symphony, among other works. Already known in Britain, through his Slavonic Dances and Slavonic Rhapsodies which had been performed there in 1879 and 1880, he was thrilled by his treatment as the lion of the 1884 season, beguiled by details such as the press apparently casting the 'ř' and 'á' to correctly print his name, and he was completely bowled-over by London itself:

I only wish you could see for yourself this city, its bustle and life it would simply take your breath away. All attempts at description are vain; anyone who has not seen and heard it would not believe it. Imagine this huge area a mass of houses and streets with a network of railways and you have some small idea what London is like. Or : imagine the New Town Theatre about five times as big and you will know what the Albert Hall is like where 10,000 people listened to [Dvořák's] *Stabat Mater* and 1050 musicians and singers played and sang - and then the enormous organ. Imagine then the most wonderful co-ordination of the whole ensemble and you will be able to imagine the impression...

This mutual love affair was consummated when, after returning home in June 1884, he was elected as an honorary member of the Philharmonic Society and commissioned by it to write a symphony. Dvořák was in no small way impressed by this honour (commissions from the society had resulted in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Mendelssohn's Fourth earlier in the century) and in December that year he set

to work on his Seventh Symphony. By the end of the month he could write to a friend, 'wherever I go I think of nothing but my [symphony], which must be capable of stirring the world, and may God grant that it will!' At the beginning of 1884, Dvořák had travelled especially to Berlin to hear an early performance of Brahms's Third Symphony and it had made a deep impression on him. Brahms had also cajoled the younger composer somewhat about writing a better symphony than his previous effort and Dvořák was keen to prove himself. This was not quite the normal rivalry between composers, since Brahms had been instrumental in lending Dvořák not only encouragement and support, but also, after hearing his 10 Moravian Duets in 1877, personally recommended Dvořák to his own publisher, Simrock. Their relationship was one of mutual respect, though it is clear that Dvořák was in awe of Brahms, even submitting the proofs of many a work to the German. Having already scored a great critical and financial success with Brahms's own Hungarian Dances, Simrock was keen to repeat the experience, and did so by publishing Dvořák's Slavonic Dances and achieving an extraordinary over-night sensation.

Dvořák was keen not to let Brahms down, and admitted as much to Simrock in a letter of

February, 1885. A month later, the symphony was complete and a further month on he was conducting the first performance of the work on 22 April at St James's Hall, London. Writing to his friend Antonin Rus of the occasion, Dvořák enthused, 'This time, too, the English again welcomed me as heartily and as demonstratively as always heretofore. The Symphony was immensely successful and at the next performance will be a still greater success'. Despite having been written in a matter of three months, the symphony displays a formal mastery which is matched only by an emotional intensity, infusing what might be called the 'international' idiom of the day with tightly controlled and developed Slavonic musical elements and colourings which are tinged more with storm and melancholy than with joy.

Just as Dvořák's Seventh Symphony has been sometimes dubbed the 'Tragic', so his Eighth might well bear the monikers 'Poetic' or 'Pastoral' such is its easeful nature in comparison to its predecessor. It was composed even quicker than the Seventh, in about 10 weeks from the end of August 1899, at his brother-in-law Count Dr Václav Kounic's estate at Vysoká u Příbram, in Central Bohemia. Dvořák's successes in England and elsewhere had afforded him the means to purchase a

plot of land from his brother-in-law and build a country home in which to escape publishers, performers and city life in general. The full score of the symphony, completed on 8 November, bears the inscription, 'For being admitted to membership of the Emperor Franz Josef's Czech Academy of Science, Literature and the Arts' - an honour bestowed upon him in April 1890. Recent years had seen his fame rise and his fortune accrue and he was now as famous as any composer still alive and at work. So it came as quite a shock when Simrock offered him a mere 1,000 Marks for publication. Dvořák had previously regarded the 3,000 Marks initially offered by Simrock for his Seventh Symphony as derisory (particularly after its great London success) and this new offer forced his hand and he instead granted the first publishing rights to the London house of Novello. A couple of months after the symphony's premiere in Prague on 2 January 1890, he was again making his way to England to conduct the work for the Philharmonic Society. He would reprise the work at Cambridge University the following year, on 15 June, together with his Stabat Mater, as proof of his academic suitability to be conferred an honorary Doctor of Music the following day. Despite finding the amount of music enough to give him indigestion and the Latin, which dominated the academic proceedings,

impenetrable, he remembered the ensuing glory as 'quite frightening'. Dvořák's extended stay in the United States a couple of years later brought an even greater triumph to the work when it was performed at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, on 'Czech Day' by an augmented orchestra of 114 to an audience of around 8,000.

Back in Central Europe, the symphony was criticized by the powerful Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick as fragmentary and even by Brahms as somewhat lacking in substance. And while the work does not conform to the symphonic norms of the time, it rather takes its cue from Schumann in experimenting with sonata form and is successful in creating a whole from a rhapsodic treatment of linked melodic motifs, most notably in the opening movement. As a whole, the atmosphere speaks of Dvořák's Bohemian countryside: bird calls, pastoral calm, happily plodding bass lines, elegant waltzes, stamping country dances, fanfares, hints of chorales or funeral marches and radiant or rip-roaring joy. This is a symphony marking Dvořák's first venture proper into the profusion of ideas and effects that, after the Ninth Symphony, transported him to the new world of the symphonic poem.

BIOGRAPHIES

SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS

Born in 1925 of Australian parents in America, Sir Charles Mackerras studied in Sydney and Prague and made his debut as an opera conductor at Sadler's Wells. He was First Conductor of the Hamburg Opera (1966-69) and Musical Director of both Sadler's Wells (later English National Opera) (1970-77), and of Welsh National Opera (1987-92), where his notable Janáček productions, amongst many others, were acclaimed. From 1976-79 Sir Charles was Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and also conducted the opening public concert at the Sydney Opera House. Sir Charles is Conductor Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of the OAE, Conductor Laureate of the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of the Welsh National Opera and Principal Guest Conductor Emeritus of the San Francisco Opera. A specialist in Czech repertory, Sir Charles was Principal Guest Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra from 1997-2003, following his

life-long association with both the Orchestra and many aspects of Czech musical life. Sir Charles has undertaken much research into performance practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the highlights of the 1991 season was the re-opening of the Estates Theatre in Prague, scene of the original premiere of *Don Giovanni*. Sir Charles conducted a new production of that opera to mark the bi-centenary of Mozart's death. He has recorded all Mozart's Symphonies and Serenades with the Prague Chamber Orchestra. With the Scottish Chamber Orchestra he has recorded seven Mozart operas, most recently *La Clemenza di Tito* following a performance at the 2005 Edinburgh International Festival. 2002 marked Sir Charles' 50th year with the Edinburgh Festival, in which he conducted Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*, Handel's *Jeptha* and Mozart's *Gran Partita*.

His vast discography includes an award-winning cycle of Janáček operas with

the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten's *Gloriana* [awarded *Gramophone* magazine's Best Opera Recording for 1994] and Dvořák's *Rusalka* with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra awarded *Gramophone* magazine's 'Best Opera Recording' and 'Best Recording of the Year', the 'Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik', 'Prix Caecilia' and 'Edison Award' for 1999. Notable are his recordings with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra of Beethoven's and Mahler's symphonies and Brahms' four symphonies with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Sir Charles and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra have recorded eight Mozart concertos with Alfred Brendel. Sir Charles has recorded much Czech music with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, including Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances*, Smetana's *Ma Vlast*, Martinů's *Field Mass* and *Double Concerto* and Janáček's *Kát'a Kabanová*, *Sarka* and the *Glagolitic Mass* all for Supraphon. For Chandos records he has recorded *The Magic Flute*, *The Makropoulos Case*, *Così Fan Tutte* and *Hansel and Gretel*, which won the 2008 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording. For Hyperion Records he has recorded the complete Beethoven symphonies.

Sir Charles made his debut with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 1964, where he has since conducted 33 operas, including *Un Ballo in Maschera* which celebrated his 50th anniversary and 80th birthday in 2005. He also recently conducted *Kát'a Kabanová* there, an opera that he first introduced London audiences to in 1951 at the Sadler's Wells theatre; the first performance of a Janáček opera in the United Kingdom. In addition to his many appearances with the San Francisco Opera, he has a long association with the Metropolitan Opera, New York. He made his debut at the Salzburg Festival, with the Vienna Philharmonic, conducting *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 1998, and returned to Salzburg to conduct the Orchestra in a programme of Schubert and Mozart in 2005. He made his debut with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 2004, in which year he also made his debut at the National Theatre Prague, conducting Janáček's *Vylety pana broucka* (The Excursions of Mr Broucek). Sir Charles received a CBE in 1974 and was knighted in 1979. He was honoured with the Medal of Merit from the Czech Republic in 1996, made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1997 and made a Companion of Honour in the 2003 Queen's Birthday

Honours. In May 2005 he was presented with the Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal and in November 2005 was the first recipient of the Queen's Medal for Music. He is a DMus (Hon) of the Universities of

Hull, York, Nottingham, Griffith (Australia), Oxford, Napier, Melbourne, Sydney, the Janáček Academy of Music (Brno) and the Prague Academy of Music. Sir Charles is also President of Trinity College of Music.

philharmonia orchestra

The Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras. Acknowledged as the UK's foremost musical pioneer, with an extraordinary recording legacy, the Philharmonia leads the field for its quality of playing, and for its innovative approach to audience development, residencies, music education and the use of new technologies in reaching a global audience. Together with its relationships with the world's most sought-after artists, most importantly its Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonia Orchestra is at the heart of British musical life.

Today, the Philharmonia has the greatest claim of any orchestra to be the UK's

National Orchestra. It is committed to presenting the same quality, live music-making in venues throughout the country as it brings to London and the great concert halls of the world. Every year the Orchestra performs more than 200 concerts, as well as presenting chamber performances by the Soloists of the Philharmonia Orchestra, and recording scores for films, CDs and computer games. Since 1995 the Orchestra's work has been underpinned by its much admired UK Residency Programme, which began with the launch of its residencies at the Bedford Corn Exchange and London's Southbank Centre, and now also includes De Montfort Hall in Leicester, the Anvil in Basingstoke and a series of partnerships

across Kent and the Thames Gateway, based in Canterbury. The Orchestra's international extensive touring schedule each season involves appearances at the finest concert halls across Europe, the USA and Asia.

During its first six decades, the Philharmonia Orchestra has collaborated with most of the great classical artists of the 20th century. Conductors associated with the Orchestra include Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Toscanini, Cantelli, Karajan and Giulini. Otto Klemperer was the first of many outstanding Principal Conductors, and other great names have included Lorin Maazel (Associate Principal Conductor), Riccardo Muti (Principal Conductor and Music Director) and Giuseppe Sinopoli (Music Director). As well as Esa-Pekka Salonen, current titled conductors are Christoph von Dohnányi (Honorary Conductor for Life), Sir Charles Mackerras (Principal Guest Conductor), Kurt Sanderling (Conductor Emeritus) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Conductor Laureate).

The Philharmonia Orchestra continues to pride itself on its long-term collaborations with the finest musicians of our day, supporting new as well as established artists. This policy extends into the Orchestra itself, where many of the

players have solo or chamber music careers as well as their work with the Orchestra. The Philharmonia's Martin Musical Scholarship Fund has for many years supported talented musicians at the start of their careers and a new Orchestral Award, inaugurated in 2005, allows two young players every year to gain performing experience within the Orchestra.

The Orchestra is also recognised for its innovative programming policy, at the heart of which is a commitment to performing and commissioning new works by leading composers, among them the Artistic Director of its Music of Today series, Julian Anderson. Since 1945 the Philharmonia Orchestra has commissioned more than 100 new works from composers including Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Mark-Anthony Turnage and James MacMillan. The Philharmonia Orchestra's joint series with SBC, *Clocks and Clouds: The Music of György Ligeti*, won the Royal Philharmonic Society's Best Concert Series Award in 1997 and *Related Rocks: The Music of Magnus Lindberg*, was nominated for an RPS Award. Other recent awards for the Orchestra include the RPS Large Ensemble Award and two *Evening Standard* Awards for Outstanding Artistic Achievement and



Outstanding Ensemble. In May 2007 PLAY. orchestra, a 'virtual Philharmonia Orchestra' created in partnership with Southbank Centre and Central St Martin's College of Art, won the RPS Education Award.

Throughout its history, the Philharmonia Orchestra has been committed to finding new

ways to bring its top quality live performance to audiences worldwide, and to using new technologies to achieve this. Many millions of people since 1945 have enjoyed their first experience of classical music through a Philharmonia recording, and in 2007 audiences can engage with the Orchestra through webcasts, podcasts, downloads,

computer games and film scores as well as through its unique interactive music education website launched in 2005, The Sound Exchange (www.philharmonia.co.uk/thesoundexchange), which is now visited by almost 2 million people a year. In 2005 the Philharmonia became the first ever classical music organisation to be shortlisted for a BT Digital Music Award, and in the same year the Orchestra presented both the first ever fully interactive webcast and the first podcast by a UK orchestra.

In September 2005 computer games with Philharmonia scores were at No.1 and No.2 in the national charts, while the Orchestra's scores for the last two Harry Potter computer games have both been nominated for BAFTA Awards. Recording and live broadcasting both also continue to play a significant part in the Orchestra's activities: since 2003 the Philharmonia has enjoyed a major partnership with Classic FM, as The Classic FM Orchestra on Tour, as well as continuing to broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Recorded live at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall Hall, London
Symphony No. 7 – 9 October 2008 **Symphony No. 8** – 12 October 2008
 Engineer - Jonathan Stokes, Classic Sound Ltd Producer - Misha Donat

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