

Serenade in D Minor, Op. 44, B. 77

(Serenade for Wind Instruments)

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)



About the Composer

- Born in a Czech village (area of Bohemia) in 1841.
- Grew up with a musical father (performed the zither) with whom he often played with in a village band.
- Played violin, viola, piano, and organ
- Lived in numerous places during his youth due to classist school systems in Austrian Empire.
 - ❖ Continued to travel throughout his life, but continued to call Prague his permanent home.
- Romantic era composer with connections to both classical tradition and folk tradition.
 - ❖ Known for inclusion of folk music in his compositions.
 - Slavic dance forms/Slavic traditional music
- Composed variety of works: symphonies (9), symphonic poems/ tone poems, choral works, operas, serenades, chamber music, and piano music.
 - ❖ Large number of works have opus numbers, but they are not necessarily in order of composition date
 - ❖ Works were catalogued by Jarmil Burghauser with "B".
- Drew inspiration from a variety of composers & his teachers:
 - ❖ Johannes Brahms, Richard Wagner, Bedrich Smetana, and Antonín Liehmann

During the Serenade (1877-1878)

- Found great success as a composer - won the Austrian Prize competition for *Moravian Duets*
 - ❖ Johannes Brahms was on the committee, leading Brahms to recommend Dvořák's work to his publisher, Simrock
 - ❖ Simrock commissioned Dvořák to write a piece similar to *Moravian Duets* - Dvořák submitted *Slavonic Dances*
- Leading music critic, Louis Ehlert, praised Dvořák's recent works - leading works to become internationally known.
 - ❖ Dvořák later dedicated the *Serenade in D Minor* to Ehlert for his reviews.

Composition Date

- Composed January 4th, 1878 - January 18th, 1878
- Began composing the work after attending a concert in Vienna that featured three movements from Mozart's *Serenade in B-flat Major*, K. 361 ("*Gran Partita*").

Premiere of the Work

- The *Serenade in D Minor* was premiered at Prague's Zofin Palace on November 17th, 1878
- Performed by the Provisional Theatre Orchestra of Prague with Dvořák conducting
- Concert was exclusively works composed by Dvořák

Instrumentation

- 2 oboes
- 2 clarinets
- 2 bassoons
- 1 contrabassoon (ad libitum)
- 3 horns
- 1 cello
- 1 double bass

"Take a look at Dvořák's Serenade for Wind Instruments. I hope you will enjoy it as much as I do...It would be difficult to discover a finer, more refreshing impression of really abundant and charming creative talent. Have it played to you; I feel sure the players will enjoy doing it!" - **Johannes Brahms**

About the *Serenade in D Minor*

- Composers like Dvořák desired to revive serenades, but with meaning to the present
- Work considered to be an homage to Mozart
 - ❖ Heavily features Czech folk music

Movements

I. Moderato, quasi marcia

- Traditional introductory march in D minor, with cadences and themes in F Major
- Strong, bold tutti march theme
- Melody often featured in oboe (occasional clarinet solos) - sixteenths in lower voices
- Dramatic dynamic contrasts
- Numerous ornaments

II. Minuetto

- Honors minuet of Classical tradition (ABA)
 - ❖ Minuet, trio, minuet (not the double trio of Mozart's *Gran Partita*)
- *Sousedska* (Czech folk dance - slow dance in 3/4) thought to be heard in Minuet
 - ❖ *Dumka* also thought to be used
- Contains rhythms similar to that of *Slavonic Dances* or the "Slavonic style" in Trio
 - ❖ The *furiant* - folk dance emphasizing the hemiola rhythm

III. Andante con moto

- Primarily in A Major
- Opening draws inspiration from the third movement of *Gran Partita*
 - ❖ Can be heard especially in accompaniment voices "motor" rhythm
- Lyrical solos in clarinet and oboe

IV. Finale

- Variety of keys: D minor, A minor, C-sharp major, and D Major (ending on a D Major chord)
- Resembles a polka, or lively dance
- Four themes with transition to march motif from the first movement - connects the work as a whole