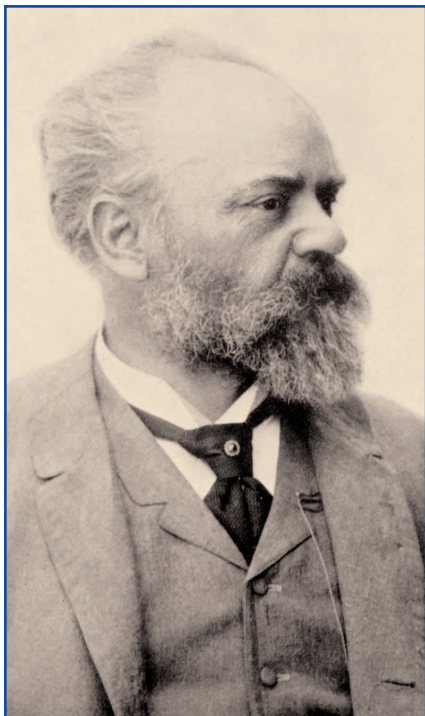




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# Antonín DVOŘÁK

Complete Solo  
Piano Music

Theme  
with Variations

Eight Waltzes

Two Minuets

Stefan Veselka

## Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) Complete Solo Piano Music, Volume 1

Antonín Dvořák was born in 1841, the son of a butcher and innkeeper in the village of Nelahozeves, near the Bohemian town of Kralupy, some forty 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 the critic Eduard Hanslick in Vienna and subsequently to that of Brahms, a later member of the examining committee. 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* 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 blue-print 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 his *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.

**Keith Anderson**

## Dvořák's Piano Music

Dvořák is better known for his orchestral works and his chamber music than for anything he wrote for the piano, although one of the *Humoresques* retains a place in popular repertoire.

The *Two Minuets*, *Op. 28, B. 58*, were written in 1876-77, presumably originally as orchestral pieces, perhaps commissioned by a Prague organization for a ball. They are graceful *Ländler*, composed in a chain-like structure, each consisting of five sections and a coda.

The *Dumka*, *Op. 35, B. 64*, appeared together with the *Theme with Variations*, *Op. 36* and the *Piano Concerto*, *Op. 33*, in 1876. It is Dvořák's first piece under the title *Dumka*, to be followed by more famous pieces, including the so-called 'Dumky' *Trio*, *Op. 90*, and the *Dumka* from the *String Quartet in E flat major*, *Op. 51*. It is an elegiac, deeply-felt work, with a very taut arrangement of voices that at times almost give the impression of a quartet. It can be understood as an elegiac antithesis to the more cheerful and lyrical variations.

The *Theme with Variations* is among Dvořák's longest works for the piano. The theme is laid out generously and lyrically over 45 bars. Here the composer had much space to experiment, exemplified in the first two variations, structured in triplets and in

demisemiquavers. The third variation is ballad-like and resembles the *Dumka* in its mood. The fourth and fifth are highly demanding variations which require much practice from the pianist. Dvořák himself suggested that the fifth variation would be better left out because of its great difficulty. In contrast to this octave variation stands the lovely, chorale-like sixth variation, one of Dvořák's musically deepest ideas. After an exuberant seventh and the loud, vigorous chords of the last variation, the work closes as it began in a song-like, lyrical atmosphere.

The *Three Album Leaves* are all short occasional compositions in highly varying moods. They were written during the years 1880-1888. *Otázka (Question)*, *B. 128a* and the *Album Leaf in E flat major* were written in guest-books for friends by Dvořák.

Dvořák wrote his *Eight Waltzes*, *Op. 54, B. 101*, in 1880. Unlike the waltzes of Brahms and Chopin, which he did not want to imitate, Dvořák's waltzes, originally commissioned for an anniversary ball, impress by their mood changes from melancholy to extreme joy in proportionally short sequences. These mood changes create the special magic of the waltzes. Dvořák's high opinion of this work can be seen in the fact that he arranged the first and fourth *Waltzes* for string quartet after their completion.

**Stefan Veselka**

## Stefan Veselka



Stefan Veselka was born at Stavanger in Norway in 1968, the son of Czech parents, and is related to the composer Leoš Janáček. From 1986 he studied piano at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, moving in 1988 to the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin, where he successfully completed his studies. Following his debut in 1985, he made numerous successful appearances as a soloist or as a chamber musician throughout Europe, in Japan and in the United States. He has been a prize-winner in several national and international piano competitions, including the European Piano Competition in Luxembourg, the Beethoven International Piano Competition in Vienna, and the A. Schnabel Competition in Berlin. In 1988 he was awarded the SHELL Prize. He has collaborated with well known orchestras and conductors in important international festivals and in major concert venues. He has also worked for some years as a conductor. His recordings include releases of works by Prokofiev, Debussy, Lutoslawski, Webern and Valen.

**Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)**  
**Complete Solo Piano Music, Volume 1**

<b>Two Minuets, Op. 28 / B. 58</b>	<b>11:53</b>
① No. 1 in A flat major	7:06
② No. 2 in F major	4:48
<b>③ Dumka in D minor, Op. 35 / B. 64</b>	<b>7:22</b>
<b>Theme with Variations in A flat major, Op. 36 / B. 65</b>	<b>15:24</b>
④ Theme: Tempo di Minuetto	1:48
⑤ Variation 1: without tempo indication	1:07
⑥ Variation 2: without tempo indication	1:17
⑦ Variation 3: Poco meno mosso	2:44
⑧ Variation 4: Allegretto scherzando	0:41
⑨ Variation 5: Tempo I	0:45
⑩ Variation 6: Poco andante e molto tranquillo	2:02
⑪ Variation 7: Più mosso	0:58
⑫ Variation 8: Un poco più mosso	4:03
<b>Album Leaves</b>	<b>3:09</b>
⑬ No. 1: Allegretto in F sharp minor, B. 109/2	1:40
⑭ No. 2: A Question - Allegretto in G minor, B. 128a	0:33
⑮ No. 3: Moderato in E flat major, B. 158	0:56
<b>Eight Waltzes, Op. 54 / B. 101</b>	<b>26:44</b>
⑯ No. 1: Moderato in A major	4:10
⑰ No. 2: Allegro con fuoco in A minor	3:18
⑱ No. 3: Poco Allegro in E major	2:58
⑲ No. 4: Allegro vivace in D flat major	2:37
⑳ No. 5: Allegro in B flat major	3:05
㉑ No. 6: Allegro in F major	4:43
㉒ No. 7: Allegro in D minor	3:05
㉓ No. 8: Allegro vivace in E flat major	2:48

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Playing Time  
64:32

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Booklet notes in English

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DVOŘÁK: Complete Solo Piano Music • 1

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Although Dvořák's piano works are perhaps the least known of all his music, he wrote imaginatively and attractively for the instrument and created some of his best known works such as the two sets of *Slavonic Dances* and the *Legends* originally for piano duet. The solo piano works were mainly intended as short dance or atmospheric movements, alternating between passion and intimacy, exuberance and lyricism, for performance in the concert hall rather than the salon. This first disc of Dvořák's Complete Published Solo Piano Music features one of his most extended works for the instrument, the *Theme with Variations*, and the delightful *Waltzes, Op. 54*, whose mood changes from melancholy to extreme joy in proportionally short sequences.

**DeutschlandRadio****Antonín  
DVOŘÁK**  
(1841-1904)**Complete Published Solo Piano Music • 1**

- |                |  |              |
|----------------|--|--------------|
| <b>1 - 2</b>   | <b>Two Minuets, Op. 28 / B. 58</b>                               | <b>11:53</b> |
| <b>3</b>       | <b>Dumka in D minor, Op. 35 / B. 64</b>                          | <b>7:22</b>  |
| <b>4 - 12</b>  | <b>Theme with Variations in A flat major,<br/>Op. 36 / B. 65</b> | <b>15:24</b> |
| <b>13 - 15</b> | <b>Three Album Leaves</b>  | <b>3:09</b>  |
| <b>16 - 24</b> | <b>Eight Waltzes, Op. 54 / B. 101</b>                            | <b>26:44</b> |

**Stefan Veselka, Piano**

Recorded at Studio 10, DeutschlandRadio Berlin, Germany, from 7th to 9th April 1999

Producer: Wolfram Nehls • Engineer: Geert Puhmann • Editor: Sabine Winkler

Booklet notes: Keith Anderson and Stefan Veselka • Publishers: Supraphon

A complete track listing can be found on page 4 of the booklet

Cover Image: Antonín Dvořák (1894) (Lebrecht Music Collection)

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