

Symphony, i.e. a symphony with American music. Quite a wrong idea. This title means nothing more than 'Impressions and Greetings from the New World' – as the Master himself more than once explained. And so when at length it was performed and when the Master read all sorts of views on it as to whether he had or had not created an 'American' music, he smiled and said, 'It seems that I have got them all confused' and added: 'At home they will understand at once what I meant.'

The **first movement** commences with a slow introduction, which swiftly changes from sadness to a passionate outburst. Following an answering set of phrases, the orchestra then repeats the theme, before leading into a second theme which in turn leads to the theme for flute which is reminiscent of the spiritual *Swing low sweet chariot*. In the development section, the themes follow one another, and the recapitulation is reached through various bold changes of key. This boldness continues, with the original second subject presented in keys remote from the Symphony's harmonic base. This harmonic subtlety, which is a notable feature of the Symphony, also enables Dvořák to end the movement in a blaze of glory, combining both the opening theme of the movement and that given initially to the flute.

The harmonic sophistication already seen in the first movement continues in the **second movement**. The movement is framed by a series of chords which later reoccur, and after which a beautiful melody is played by the cor anglais. The middle section of the movement contains new themes for flute and oboe playing together, and for the clarinet. A lively theme interrupts the melancholic mood created by the wind instruments' themes. This creates a feeling of jollity that is abruptly ended by

the brass playing the two themes already noted from the first movement, and the cor anglais theme again. The sombre mood of the beginning then ends the movement.

The **third movement** follows the 'scherzo and trio' structure, with once again Dvořák displaying his mastery of harmony by moving into a variety of different keys. At the end of the scherzo a transformation of the first movement's main theme, on horns and brass instruments, is heard before the trio. The trio is in the style of a *sousedka* – a dance introduced for the elderly of Bohemia at a time when popular dances were too rapid for them. In the coda the two familiar themes from the first movement return, with the climax being based on the second of these.

The **final movement** is in sonata form. The main theme is announced by the trumpets, to be followed by a more repetitive theme in the same key of E minor. This in turn is followed by a melody for the solo clarinet. In place of the development section, Dvořák creates a 'fantasia' in which these themes are closely linked, together with those from the previous movements. In the recapitulation after a brief statement of the first subject Dvořák's harmonic genius creates a brilliant transformation into the second subject. In the coda, the main theme of the first movement, to quote Tovey 'strides over the world like Wagner's Wotan when he rides the storm'. Further themes from all the movements are heard before Dvořák brings the Symphony to a close with yet more harmonic virtuosity.

Programme notes: David Patmore

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