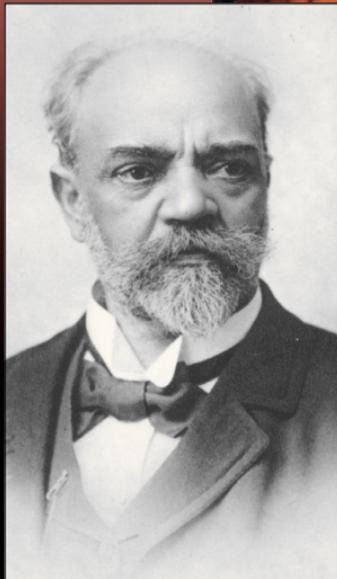


# DVOŘÁK



## 'Songs My Great-Grandfather Taught Me'

Transcriptions by Josef Suk  
of 30 Dvořák songs,  
including

*Gypsy Melodies, Op. 55*

*Love Songs, Op. 83*

*Biblical Songs, Op. 99*

**Josef Suk, violin and viola**  
**Vladimir Ashkenazy, piano**

# DVOŘÁK 30 Song Transcriptions for Violin and Viola and Piano

## *Gypsy Songs, Op. 55*

12:12

- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | No. 1, 'My song of love rings through the dusk'  | 2:58 |
| 2 | No. 2, 'Hey! Ring out my triangle'               | 0:55 |
| 3 | No. 3, 'All around the woods are still'          | 2:23 |
| 4 | No. 4, 'Songs my mother taught me'               | 2:09 |
| 5 | No. 5, 'Come and join the dancing'               | 0:59 |
| 6 | No. 6, 'Wide the sleeves and loose the trousers' | 1:10 |
| 7 | No. 7, 'Give a hawk a fine cage'                 | 1:38 |

## *In Folk Tone, Op. 73: Nos. 1 and 3*

5:01

- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| 8 | No. 1, 'Goodnight'                             | 2:23 |
| 9 | No. 3, 'Oh nothing, nothing can change for me' | 2:38 |

## *Love Songs, Op. 83*

12:55

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 10 | No. 1, 'Never will love lead us to that glad goal'  | 1:49 |
| 11 | No. 2, 'Death reigns in many a human heart'         | 1:55 |
| 12 | No. 3, 'I often wander past that house'             | 1:04 |
| 13 | No. 4, 'I know that on my love to you'              | 1:56 |
| 14 | No. 5, 'Nature lies peaceful in sleep and dreaming' | 1:24 |
| 15 | No. 6, 'Lonely in the forest I stand'               | 1:47 |
| 16 | No. 7, 'When your sweet glances fall on me'         | 1:37 |
| 17 | No. 8, 'Oh, my only dear one, but for you'          | 1:23 |

## 18 *Four Songs, Op. 82: No. 1, 'Leave Me Alone'*

2:27

## 19 *Lullaby, B194*

1:43

<b><i>Biblical Songs, Op. 99</i></b>	<b>23:00</b>
[20] No. 1, 'Clouds and darkness are round about him' (Psalm 97)	1:57
[21] No. 2, 'Thou art my hiding place and my shield' (Psalm 119)	1:43
[22] No. 3, 'Give ear to my prayer, O God' (Psalm 55)	2:41
[23] No. 4, 'The Lord is my shepherd' (Psalm 23)	2:26
[24] No. 5, 'I will sing a new song unto thee, O God' (Psalm 144)	2:50
[25] No. 6, 'Hear my cry, O God' (Psalm 61)	2:32
[26] No. 7, 'By the waters of Babylon' (Psalm 137)	2:29
[27] No. 8, 'Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me' (Psalm 25)	2:30
[28] No. 9, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills' (Psalm 121)	1:52
[29] No. 10, 'O sing unto the Lord a new song' (Psalm 96)	1:50
[30] <b><i>Moravian Duets, Op. 32: No. 11, 'Captured'</i></b>	<b>2:54</b>

TT 60:05

Josef Suk, violin [1]–[19] and [30] and viola [20]–[30]  
 Vladimir Ashkenazy, piano

# ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK: SONG TRANSCRIPTIONS BY JOSEF SUK

by Tully Potter

Although Antonín Dvořák was a highly competent string-player – good enough to hold the position of solo viola at the Provisional Theatre in Prague for nine years – and wrote reams of superb music for strings, he left relatively little for the solo violin and nothing for his own instrument. His great-grandson, Josef Suk III, has already remedied this situation to an extent, with an authoritative viola transcription of *Silent Woods*, originally for cello and orchestra; but this programme of violin and viola transcriptions – prepared at the suggestion of Martin Anderson of Toccata Classics – takes the process a step further. It also helps to focus attention on a woefully neglected area of Dvořák's *œuvre*, the songs.

Of course, everyone knows the melody which inspired the title of this album, 'Songs My Mother Taught Me'. In the days when every middle-class front parlour contained a piano, it was Dvořák's biggest hit, with the possible exception of the *Humoresque*. But what about all the other *Gypsy Melodies*, let alone the various companion sets? In 78rpm days Sir George Henschel created considerable effect by singing 'By the Waters of Babylon', from the *Biblical Songs*, to his own accompaniment; Dame Clara Butt recorded four of the same set; the great Czech contralto Marta Krásová made a lovely disc of 'Leave Me Alone'; Dorothy Maynor sang 'Tune the Strings' (*Gypsy Melodies*, No. 5) and 'The Maiden's Lament' (*In Folk Tone*, No. 3) with orchestra; and Hina Spani made a delightful record in Italian; but otherwise the cupboard was pretty bare. In recent decades a new generation of Czech singers has been bringing modern listeners the songs in the original language, but a real break-through has yet to come. Perhaps, by concentrating on the musical worth of the songs, this disc will win them new friends.

There is something of the serpent biting its own tail in the story of Dvořák's song-writing. It was falling in love with his pupil Josefina Čermáková that made him

compose his early cycle *Cypresses*, to poems by Gustav Pflieger-Moravský, in 1865. As the world knows, like Mozart before him, Dvořák ended up settling for his muse's younger sister. He and Anna Čermáková had a perfectly happy marriage, despite the deaths of children which were the inescapable lot of parents in those days, but Dvořák kept a *tendresse* for Josefina and towards the end of 1894, when he heard in America that she was very ill, he wrote her favourite among his songs, 'Leave Me Alone', into the *Adagio* of his Cello Concerto (it had been published as the first of 4 *Lieder*, Op. 82, in 1888). Soon after his return home the following spring, she died and he inserted the beautiful tune into the finale as well.

By the time he came to write the *Gypsy Melodies*, Op. 55, in 1880, Dvořák was an experienced song-composer and had an influential fan in the German tenor Gustav Walter, who sang at the Vienna Imperial Opera. As a salute to Walter, his dedicatee, Dvořák chose not to set the verses by Adolf Heyduk in the original Czech, but asked Heyduk for German translations. The songs do not partake of the true folk influences that Janáček and Dvořák's pupil Vítězslav Novák would bring to Czech music; they are rather in the style of what passed for gypsy music in the cafés of central Europe, with an admixture of Dvořák's own Slavonic soulfulness. The earliest known performance took place in Vienna on 4 February 1881, when Walter sang the first and fourth of the set. In 1904 Walter, who was among the earliest performers to give recitals devoted to *Lieder*, became the oldest German singer to make records; but frustratingly, if he included any *Gypsy Melody* among his studio choices, it was not issued.

In the 1880s Dvořák repeatedly returned to the early *Cypresses* cycle, conscious that they contained excellent ideas which should not be wasted. He revised a dozen of the eighteen songs, first a group of four and then the eight which were published as *Love Songs*, Op. 83. He also made string-quartet versions of all twelve – which, coupled with his use of 'Leave Me Alone' in the Cello Concerto, suggests that he would not have disapproved of the present enterprise. The first four songs came out in 1882, the other eight in 1889; but the quartet versions stayed in manuscript and were not published until 1957.

The *Biblical Songs*, Op. 99, as powerful in their way as Brahms' *Four Serious Songs*, were fruits of Dvořák's second year in the United States, 1894. As a devout Roman Catholic who liked to play the organ at church on a Sunday, Dvořák often turned to sacred music and produced a number of masterpieces including the *Stabat Mater*, the Requiem, the *Te Deum* and the Mass. Of all his sacred productions, the *Biblical Songs* are the most intimate. As John Clapham has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> death was all around Dvořák at that time, with the recent deaths of Gounod, Tchaikovsky and Hans von Bülow and the imminent death of the composer's own father. Even so, unlike Brahms, Dvořák managed to rise to some songs of praise and consolation among those of sorrow. He chose his texts from the Psalms – including Psalm 23 – and in this case his settings were very much tied to the Czech words from the Kralice Bible. The German and English translations require alterations in the vocal line, so the score used by Josef Suk for these transcriptions is the most accurate.

The *Lullaby*, B194,<sup>2</sup> was written in 1895, when the composer was home from America, and is in his simplest and most direct style. The two settings of folk poems, 'Goodnight' (from Moravian Slovakia) and 'Oh nothing, nothing can change for me' (also known as 'The Maiden's Lament', from Bohemia) are the first and third of a set of four composed in 1886 and published as Op. 73. And having played the violin for most of the songs and the viola for the Biblical set, Josef Suk ends by double-tracking on both instruments in 'Captured', the eleventh of Dvořák's fourteen *Moravian Duets*, composed in 1876.<sup>3</sup> Even here, with

1. John Clapham, *Antonín Dvořák, Musician and Craftsman*, Faber and Faber, London, 1966, pp. 236–37; and John Clapham, *Dvořák*, David & Charles, Newton Abbot and London, 1979, p. 130.

2. Dvořák's works acquired opus numbers as they were published. Jarmil Burghauser's systematic *Antonín Dvořák: Thematický katalog, bibliografie přehled života a díla* ('Thematic Catalogue, Bibliography, Survey of Life and Work'; Státní Nakladatelství Krásné Literatury, Hudby a Umění, Prague, 1960) at last applied order to Dvořák's output, hence the B numbers which attend his works.

3. The publishing history of the *Moravian Duets* illustrates the kind of problem Burghauser had to solve: Nos. 1–5 were published as Op. 29 and Nos. 6–13 as Op. 32; Nos. 1–13 were then republished also as Op. 32; No. 14 remained in manuscript.

two stringed instruments playing, one notices Dvořák's piano part more than one might with singers giving the text as well as the melody. Although he was not a virtuoso pianist like Smetana, Dvořák wrote some effective piano music, as well as characterful piano parts in both the chamber music and the songs. Pianists may occasionally complain that everything does not lie wholly 'under the fingers', but with a master such as Vladimir Ashkenazy on the piano stool, no one is going to notice.

*Tully Potter – a member of The Dvořák Society and The International Martinů Circle – has written extensively on music and musicians over the past forty years, with particular emphasis on string music and string players, his articles in The Strad, Gramophone and elsewhere often revealing his particular interest in the Czech tradition. He is a former editor of Classic Record Collector, reviews for The Daily Mail and has contributed to a number of books, among them The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet. His monumental biography of Adolf Busch is about to be published by Toccata Press.*

Born on 8 August 1929, **Josef Suk** has been the leading representative of the Czech violin school for six decades and honours have been showered on him, not least at home – in 1999 he received his country's highest medal for merit from President Havel. Within the Prague Spring festival alone, where he made his debut in 1957, he has performed on some eighty occasions as violin and viola soloist, chamber-player and conductor. Among his string-playing partners have been David Oistrakh, Henryk Szeryng, Salvatore Accardo, Wolfgang Schneiderhan, Miloš Sádlo, Josef Chuchro, André Navarra and Janos Starker. He comes from an illustrious musical family. His grandfather Josef Suk I was a member of the legendary Bohemian Quartet and not only Dvořák's favourite pupil but his son-in-law. His father, Josef Suk II, was highly musical and even composed, but chose to make a career as an engineer. Josef Suk III, a pupil of Jaroslav Kocian, is known not only as a lofty interpreter of the great concertos but also as a chamber musician: early in his career he led the original Prague Quartet and his Suk Trio – named after his grandfather rather than himself – acquired a worldwide reputation. In 1973 he began playing first viola in a peerless quintet with the Smetana Quartet. He officially retired from the public platform after the 2004 Prague Spring but has since made occasional appearances; and he has continued to work in the studio. Vladimir Ashkenazy is the latest of a long line of great pianists who have collaborated with him, including Jan Panenka, Rudolf Buchbinder, Julius Katchen and Rudolf Firkušný. Josef Suk

is a holder of the highest French order, Chevalier de l'Ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur, and in 2004 he was awarded the title *doctor honoris causa* by the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. He has made numerous superlative recordings for both domestic and foreign record labels, earning a host of prestigious awards. He won the Grand Prix du disque de l'Académie Charles Cros on no fewer than six occasions, in 1972 received the Edison Award and two years later the Wiener Flötenuhr. He holds a Columbia Gold Disc (1977), a Supraphon Gold Disc (1985) and a Supraphon Platinum Disc (1999) for 1,113,000 units sold. One of his most endearing recordings, released by Supraphon in 2009, features violin pieces by his grandfather, his father and himself (SU 3976-2) He has recorded an enormous amount of the music of his great-grandfather, Antonín Dvořák, documenting some pieces several times, and this album of song transcriptions is an extension of that work.

For the sessions Suk used a 1961 violin made by the great Czech luthier Přemysl Špidlen. 'It is a copy of a Strad,' he says. The viola is thought to have originated in Germany in the nineteenth century. 'It has no name but Dvořák used it in 1873 and 1874', Suk says. A variety of bows were employed at the sessions, by such makers as Pfretschner, Nurnberger and Peccatte. Suk has a large viola repertoire and has recorded such staples as *Harold in Italy*, the Mozart *Sinfonia concertante*, the Mozart and Dvořák quintets, the Shostakovich Sonata, Bruch's *Eight Pieces* and the Mozart 'Kegelstatt' Trio, as well as his transcription of *Silent Woods*. Unlike many violinists who essay the viola, he has the knack of finding the right vibrato for the lower instrument and has long enjoyed playing both violin and viola on the same evening. 'It is easy to go from violin to viola,' he says. 'From viola to violin is more difficult because the violin is smaller.' In making these transcriptions he has avoided the sort of liberties that Kreisler or Wilhelmj might have taken and has been faithful to the originals, especially in the *Biblical Songs*. 'I have done a little more in the *Gypsy Songs*,' he says, 'but not in the piano, only in the violin.'

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In the years since **Vladimir Ashkenazy** first came to prominence on the world stage in the 1955 Chopin Competition in Warsaw he has built an extraordinary career, not only as one of the most renowned and revered pianists of modern times but as an artist whose creative life encompasses a vast range of activities and continues to offer inspiration to music-lovers across the world.

Conducting has formed the largest part of his activities for the past twenty years. He took up the new position of Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in January 2009 and collaborates with them on a number of exciting projects, including composer festivals,

major recording projects and international touring activities. He has previously held posts as Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic and Music Director of NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo.

Alongside these positions, Ashkenazy continues his longstanding relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra of which he was appointed Conductor Laureate in 2000. In addition to his performances with the Orchestra in London and around the UK each season, he tours with them worldwide, and has developed landmark projects such as 'Prokofiev and Shostakovich under Stalin' in 2003 (a project which he also took to Cologne, New York, Vienna and Moscow) and 'Rachmaninoff Revisited' in 2002 at the Lincoln Center, New York.

Ashkenazy also holds the positions of Music Director of the European Union Youth Orchestra, with whom he tours each year, and Conductor Laureate of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. He maintains strong links with a number of other major orchestras with whom he has built special relationships over the years, including the Cleveland Orchestra (of which he was formerly Principal Guest Conductor), San Francisco Symphony and Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin (Chief Conductor and Music Director, 1988–96), as well as making guest appearances with many other major orchestras around the world, including the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra to whom he has returned in recent seasons.

Although conducting takes up a significant portion of his time each season, Ashkenazy maintains his devotion to the piano, these days mostly in the recording studio where he continues to build his extraordinarily comprehensive recording catalogue with releases such as the 1999 Grammy award-winning Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues, Rautavaara's Piano Concerto No. 3 (which he commissioned), Bach's *Wohltemperierte Klavier*, Rachmaninov transcriptions and Beethoven's 'Diabelli' Variations. August 2009 saw the release of a piano-duo disc with his son Vovka Ashkenazy, featuring music by Debussy and Ravel.

Beyond his hectic and fulfilling performing schedule, Ashkenazy continues to be involved in some fascinating TV projects, often inspired by his passionate drive to ensure that serious music continues to have a platform in the mainstream media and is made available to as broad an audience as possible. Many will remember his programmes with the outstanding director Christopher Nupen, including in 1979 *Music after Mao*, filmed in Shanghai, and the extraordinary *Ashkenazy in Moscow* programmes which marked his first visit, in 1989, to the country of his birth since leaving the USSR in the 1960s. More recently he has developed educational programmes with NHK TV, including the 1999 *Superteachers* working with inner-city London school children, and in 2003–4 a documentary based around his 'Prokofiev and Shostakovich under Stalin' project.



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**Michael Haas**, former producer, 'Entartete Musik', Decca

'panache and intellectual polish. Their choice of repertoire is freewheeling, their performers are adepts and their documentation is second to none.'  
**Rob Barnett**, Music on the Web



Recorded at the Bohemia Music Studio, Prague, on 6–8 September 2009  
Producer Milan Puklický; recording engineer Jan Lžičař  
Piano tuned by Ivan Sokol

Thanks to Aleš Březina, Czech Airlines, the Gymnázium Jana Nerudy, Peter Herbert, Filip Magram, Pavel Nikl, Milan Řeřicha and Carey and Martin Vosecký and family.

Booklet essay by Tully Potter  
Front-cover and booklet: session photographs by Anastasia Belina  
Design and layout: Mark Bracey

Executive producer: Martin Anderson

TOCC 0100

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Antonín Dvořák has long been known as one of music's supreme melodists, although his songs have not made quite the headway of his best-known works. Now 30 of them are given a new lease of life in transcriptions for violin/viola and piano by his great-grandson, Josef Suk – the viola pieces performed here on Dvořák's own instrument, restored especially for this recording. As Josef Suk is joined here by Vladimir Ashkenazy, this disc offers two of the world's greatest musicians playing some of its most beautiful music.



## DVOŘÁK/SUK Song Transcriptions for Violin/Viola and Piano

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<i>In Folk Tone, Op. 73</i>	<b>5:01</b>	<b>20</b> <i>Biblical Songs, Op. 99</i>	<b>23:00</b>
<b>8</b> No. 1, 'Goodnight'	2:23	<b>30</b> <i>Moravian Duets, Op. 32:</i>	
<b>9</b> No. 3, 'Oh nothing, nothing' (The Maiden's Lament')	2:38	No. 11, 'Captured'	<b>2:54</b>
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No. 1, 'Leave Me Alone'	<b>2:27</b>		<b>TT 60:05</b>

Josef Suk, violin **1** – **19** and **30** and viola **20** – **30**  
Vladimir Ashkenazy, piano

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LC14674



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