# RETHINKING DVOŘÁK

## VIEWS FROM FIVE COUNTRIES

EDITED BY

DAVID R. BEVERIDGE

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# CONTENTS

III. DVOŘÁK AS A CZECH COMPOSER



IV. DVOŘÁK AS A SLAVIC COMPOSER



V. DVOŘÁK AS A EUROPEAN COMPOSER

VI. THE IMPACT OF AMERICA ON DVOŘÁK



VII. THE IMPACT OF DVOŘÁK ON AMERICA

# 14

# Dvořák's Eighth Symphony: A Response to Tchaikovsky?

HARTMUT SCHICK

DVOŘÁK'S Eighth Symphony in G major ranks inarguably among the composer's most popular works. And yet no other work by Dvořák has received such a peculiarly divided reception as this symphony. Among the wide spectrum of concert-goers, the Eighth enjoys much greater esteem than, say, the Seventh; it also surpasses its predecessor in D minor by far in terms of the number of recordings. The judgement of the 'experts', on the other hand, is precisely the opposite. While Dvořák's Seventh is usually cited in the musicological literature as his greatest symphony, the Eighth is judged with conspicuous reserve, irritation, or open criticism.

In his *Führer durch den Konzertsaal*, Hermann Kretzschmar discusses Dvořák's Seventh and Ninth Symphonies each in ten pages, but devotes just one and a half pages to the Eighth, stating plainly that according to the prevailing views held by the European musical world since Haydn and Beethoven, Dvořák's Eighth can hardly be called a symphony: 'It is far too underdeveloped, and its fundamental conception is too strongly grounded in loose invention. It inclines toward the character of Smetana's tone-poems and of Dvořák's own Slavonic Rhapsodies.'[1]

Likewise Gerald Abraham: he completely denies any symphonic character in the first movement, and regards all the movements of the symphony except the third as musically weak, and, further, as failed experiments.[2] To be sure, Abraham overlooks a series of thematic relationships in this work, but within

A slightly different version of this chapter, in Czech trans. by Milan Pospíšil, appeared as 'Dvořák a Čajkovskij: Poznámky k Dvořákově Osmé symfonii' (Dvořák and Tchaikovsky: Remarks Concerning Dvořák's Eighth Symphony) in *Hudební věda*, 28/3 (1991), 244–56.

[1] '. . . dafür ist sie viel zu wenig durchgearbeitet und in der ganzen Anlage zu sehr auf lose Erfindung gegründet. Sie neigt zu dem Wesen der Smetanaschen Tondichtungen und dem von Dvořáks eigenen Slawischen Rhapsodien.' *Führer durch den Konzertsaal, 1. Abteilung: Sinfonie und Suite*, ii (Leipzig, 1921), 584.

[2] 'Dvořák's Musical Personality', in *Antonín Dvořák: His Achievement*, ed. Viktor Fischl (Westport, Conn., 1970), 235–7.

the criteria he applies (which are obviously Brahmsian), it is difficult to contradict his assessment. Even authors who judge the symphony positively diagnose a rhapsodic character and a rather loose succession of musical ideas throughout, and seem themselves unable to explain properly the impression of unity that the work nevertheless conveys.[3]

It has been established often enough that Dvořák pointedly distanced himself from Brahms in this work, without enquiry as to the reasons for this distancing. We should remember that immediately before the G major Symphony Dvořák composed a piano quartet (in E flat major) that in character and in construction still belongs thoroughly to his 'Brahmsian' works.[4] I believe that a better understanding of the symphony's peculiarity requires a more careful consideration of the circumstances related to its origin, and that a clue is offered by the name Tchaikovsky.

During his second visit to Prague in late 1888, Tchaikovsky invited Dvořák to Russia, and in the following summer he commissioned Vasilij Iljich Safonov to settle the details with Dvořák. On 24 August 1889 (several days after completion of his Piano Quartet in E flat major) Dvořák wrote a letter to Safonov regarding the programme for his concert in Moscow, scheduled for early 1890. In this letter Dvořák cites a number of his own works that he could bring with him to Moscow and conduct there himself. He suggests the *Husitská* Overture, the Symphonic Variations, the *Scherzo capriccioso*, and, as a fourth work, one of his symphonies. 'But which?' he asks; 'I have three symphonies: D major, D minor, and F major (all three published by Simrock in Berlin).' Safonov should make the choice or discuss the matter with Tchaikovsky.[5]

[3] This judgement coincides roughly with that of Brahms himself, who, according to his friend Richard Heuberger, commented on Dvořák's Eighth Symphony in 1891 as follows: 'Too much that's fragmentary, incidental, loiters about in the piece. Everything fine, musically captivating and beautiful—but no main points! Especially in the first movement, the result is not proper. But a charming musician! When one says of Dvořák that he fails to achieve anything great and comprehensive, having too many individual ideas, this is correct. Not so with Bruckner, all the same he offers so little!' ('Zu viel Fragmentarisches, Nebensächliches treibt sich darin herum. Alles fein, musikalisch fesselnd und schön—aber keine Hauptsachen! Besonders im ersten Satz wird nichts Rechtes draus. Aber ein reizender Musiker! Wenn man Dvořák nachsagt, er komme vor lauter einzelnen Einfällen nicht dazu, etwas Großes Zusammenfassendes zu leisten, so trifft dies zu. Bei Bruckner aber nicht, der bietet ja ohnedies so wenig!') See Richard Heuberger, *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms*, 2nd edn. (Tutzing, 1976), 47. Trans. of this passage according to David Beveridge in 'Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, an Interpretation', in *Dvořák and his World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 82.

[4] Cf. Hartmut Schick, 'Konstruktion aus einem Intervall: Zur harmonischen und tonalen Struktur von Dvořáks Klavierquartett op. 87', in *Antonín Dvořák 1841–1991: Report of the International Musicological Congress Dobříš 17th–20th September 1991*, ed. Milan Pospíšil and Marta Ottlová (Prague, 1994), 91–102.

[5] 'Das wäre also: 1. eine Ouvertüre, "*Husitská*", 2. dann die "*Sinfonischen Variationen*", dann 3. ein "*Scherzo capriccioso*", und 4. eine von meinen Sinfonien (aber welche?). Ich habe 3 Sinfonien: D dur, D moll und F dur (alle bei Simrock in Berlin). Dann habe ich ein Violinkonzert und ein Klavierkonzert, welche Herr Hřímalý oder Herr Sapelnikov spielen könnte. Das sind nur so mein Vorschläge. Bitte also, wählen Sie selbst oder besprechen Sie sich mit Herrn Tschaikowsky!' *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a dokumenty*—

Just two days after this letter, on 26 August 1889, Dvořák began outlining a new symphony in G major, his Eighth, and it is easy to imagine that, while he was considering which of his symphonies might be suitable for Russia, he came to the idea that indeed an entirely new symphony should be written for this occasion.

This presumption is supported by two further letters from Dvořák to Safonov. On 2 October 1889, Dvořák gave Safonov a new programme recommendation, in which he indicated as a fifth item 'a symphony—either the D minor or F major, or I will bring a *new one*, which is still in manuscript form; I am however uncertain if I will be finished with the work.'[6] And on 8 January 1890—the Eighth Symphony meanwhile completed—Dvořák wrote to Safonov, 'Most honoured Herr Direktor! To your esteemed enquiry regarding the symphony, I beg to recommend the new Symphony in G major, still in manuscript form.'[7] Should Simrock be unable to provide the printed version in time, Dvořák would bring the manuscript score and parts with him to Russia. He wanted to have it performed not only in Moscow but in St Petersburg as well.

Nevertheless, Dvořák decided soon thereafter not to perform the new symphony in Russia, but rather to leave the first foreign première to the London Philharmonic, to which he owed a gesture of gratitude. The symphony was not only performed but also published in England (by Novello) and soon took the nickname 'The English'. However, we now see that it would be much more appropriate to call it 'The Russian', in view of its origin. This would also apply to some internal features.

To write a symphony for Russia meant, of course, to compete with the symphonies of Tchaikovsky. We know—from the testimony of Janáček, for example[8]—that Dvořák studied the newest compositions of his contemporaries very carefully, and that they often provided a stimulus for his own compositions. It would therefore have been nothing out of the ordinary for him to react in a similarly creative manner to Tchaikovsky. To my knowledge, however, no Tchaikovskian influence has been ever pointed out in Dvořák's music.

*Kritické vydání* (Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents—Critical Edition, ed. Milan Kuna et al., ii (Prague, 1988), 387. The correspondence between Dvořák and his Russian interlocutors may be found in Eng. trans. in John Clapham, 'Dvořák's Visit to Russia', *Musical Quarterly*, 51 (1965), 493–506.

[6] '*Eine Sinfonie.* Entweder die D moll oder F dur, oder bringe ich eine *neue*, die noch Manuskript ist, ich weiß aber nicht *bestimmt*, ob ich mit dem Werke fertig sein werde.' *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence*, ii. 393. The first four items were now the First Slavonic Rhapsody, the Symphonic Variations, the Violin Concerto, and the *Scherzo capriccioso*.

[7] 'Sehr geehrter Herr Direktor! Auf Ihre werte Anfrage bezüglich der Sinfonie erlaube ich mir, Ihnen also die neue *Sinfonie in G dur*, welche noch Manuskript ist, vorzuschlagen.' *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence*, iii (Prague, 1989), 15.

[8] See Leoš Janáček, *Musik des Lebens: Skizzen, Feuilletons, Studien*, ed. Theodora Straková (Leipzig, 1979), 45.

We know that Dvořák received his introduction to Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony on 30 November 1888, when Tchaikovsky himself conducted it in Prague just a few weeks after its world première. On this occasion Tchaikovsky also presented his new opera, *Eugene Onegin*, which made a deep impression on Dvořák, as he reported subsequently in a letter to Tchaikovsky.[9] In this letter Dvořák didn't mention the symphony; however, his pupil Oskar Nedbal later remembered that Dvořák was initially startled by the unusual character and originality of tone-colour in Tchaikovsky's music, in particular the Fifth Symphony, but soon understood its greatness and profundity.[10] And there is some evidence that he had studied this symphony very carefully when, a few months after Tchaikovsky's visit, he began writing his own Eighth Symphony.

When Dvořák deals with the work of another composer in his own music, he usually selects the same key or a very closely related one. (Cf. for example his String Quartet in C major, modelled in part on Schubert's C major String Quintet, or his Sixth Symphony in D major with its relation to the Second Symphony in the same key by Brahms.) And so he does here. After the gloomy D minor of Dvořák's Seventh Symphony, Tchaikovsky's key of E minor would hardly have been considered; instead Dvořák chose the most closely related major key, namely G. Writing his symphony in major, he nevertheless follows Tchaikovsky by beginning in the minor (G minor) and likewise with a self-contained, elegiac introductory theme preceding in both cases the main theme of the sonata form—a feature that is very unusual for Dvořák, who begins nearly all his larger works with either the main theme itself or a motivic prototype thereof.[11]

Except for the initial note-repetitions, the opening melody of the Eighth Symphony has admittedly nothing melodically in common with the 'Fate' theme at the beginning of Tchaikovsky's Fifth (see Ex. 14.1, Theme 1 in each symphony). But structural similarities are present throughout: the wide-reaching minor-mode melody in the tenor range with subdued dynamics, the clarinets carrying the melody low in their range (combined with, in Dvořák's case, the cello, bassoon, and French horn), and the accompaniment of striding crotchets separated by rests, which in Tchaikovsky's case vividly suggest a funeral march.

[9] See Dvořák's letter of 14 Jan. 1889, in *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence*, ii. 359. This letter was written in Czech.

[10] This information I owe to Ch. 13.

[11] To be sure, Dvořák's introductory theme in the Eighth Symphony is not a slow introduction like Tchaikovsky's but a calm melody in the main tempo, felt to be not yet the main theme, but a bit more than an introduction, whereas the following main theme in turn seems perhaps too lightweight for this function, and is introduced more as an episodic figuration. Regarding this ambiguity and its formal implications, see Jaroslav Volek, 'Tektonické ambivalence v symfoniích Antonína Dvořáka', *Hudební věda* 21/1 (1984), 18 ff.

In the first movement of Dvořák's G major Symphony, the numerous themes and motifs, closely following one another without apparent logic, have always annoyed commentators—at least, the more critical of them. A comparison with the opening movement of Tchaikovsky's E minor Symphony shows, however, that for every one of Dvořák's themes (with one exception) there is a counterpart in Tchaikovsky.

The main themes of the respective opening movements (Ex. 14.1, Theme 2) have, again, nothing melodically in common. But both are introduced by solo wind instruments piano or pianissimo, and dotted rhythms play an important role in both cases (also in the ensuing elaborative passage). In both movements, the primary key-area of the exposition culminates in a fortissimo repetition of the main theme, and both composers proceed from this to the second group without any real transition.

Particularly striking are the parallels between the two works during the second group of the exposition, in which three distinct themes follow one another. The initial theme of the second group is in both cases transient and tonally unstable (Ex. 14.1, Theme 3, shown with the full texture in Ex. 14.2): it does not yet establish the true secondary key, but rather, at first, the dominant of the primary key—B minor in Tchaikovsky, D major in Dvořák—and in both cases these keys are not actually confirmed, but only implied by their dominants. The instrumentation is identical: rich four-part strings (violins, violas, and cellos), with conspicuous waves of crescendo and decrescendo. Furthermore, to the octave figure of the winds interspersed throughout Tchaikovsky's strings theme, Dvořák provides a perfect parallel: the octave decorations in the flute and clarinet.

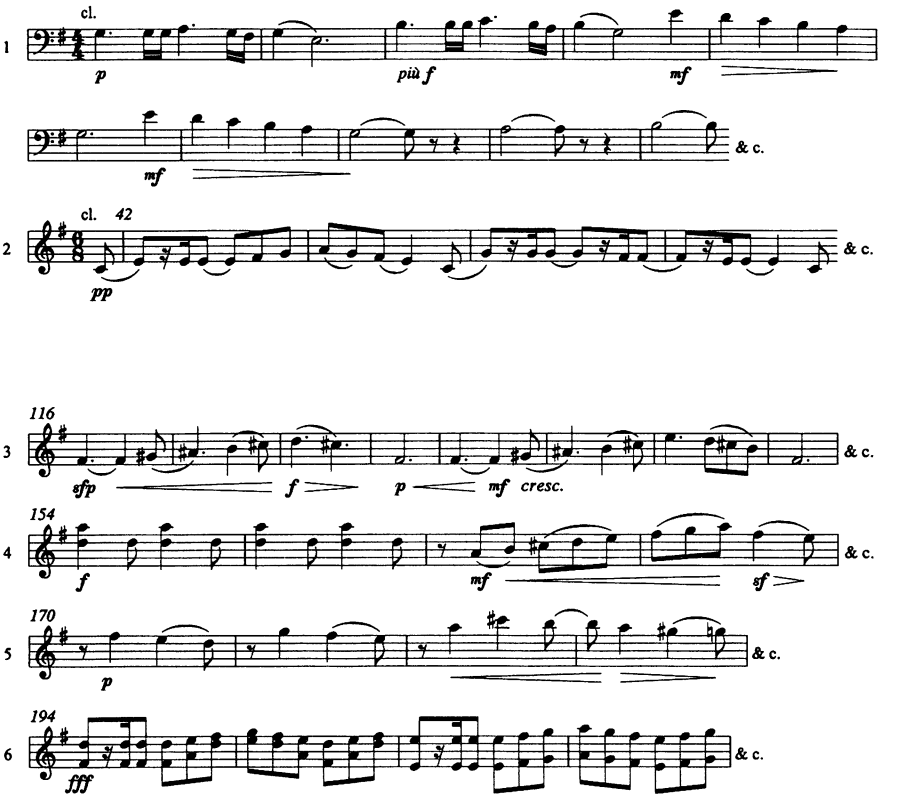
In both movements there follows a strongly contrasting theme, static but very rhythmic, made up of repeated wide leaps (octaves or fifths) and a closing scalar passage (Ex. 14.1, Theme 4). Both composers assign this theme to the woodwinds (answered in Tchaikovsky's case by the strings), and in both cases it is immediately repeated without change. With the arrival of this theme Tchaikovsky has achieved his tonal aim—the secondary key, D major—but Dvořák not yet completely. Dvořák presents this theme in B minor, the minor variant of his secondary key, B major.

The third and final theme of the second group is in both movements a wide-ranging, highly melodic major-mode theme which starts at piano and soon begins to rise in dynamics (Ex. 14.1, Theme 5). Dvořák's theme begins like the Tchaikovsky theme with the third scale-degree, then ascends step by step in a similar manner, quite nearly paraphrasing the Tchaikovskian melody in another metre.

Finally, the closing section of the exposition in both movements begins with a fortissimo tutti in which the brass blares out a reduced version of the

Ex. 14.1

*a.* Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, first movement




main theme (Ex. 14.1, Theme 6), namely its transformation into a pure trumpet signal. Once more the motivic shapes are very different, but basically the same thing occurs in both movements. And even at the end of the exposition, Dvořák's repeated descending fifths in the flute and oboe (mm. 121 ff.) seem to be hinting at Tchaikovsky and the close of his exposition.

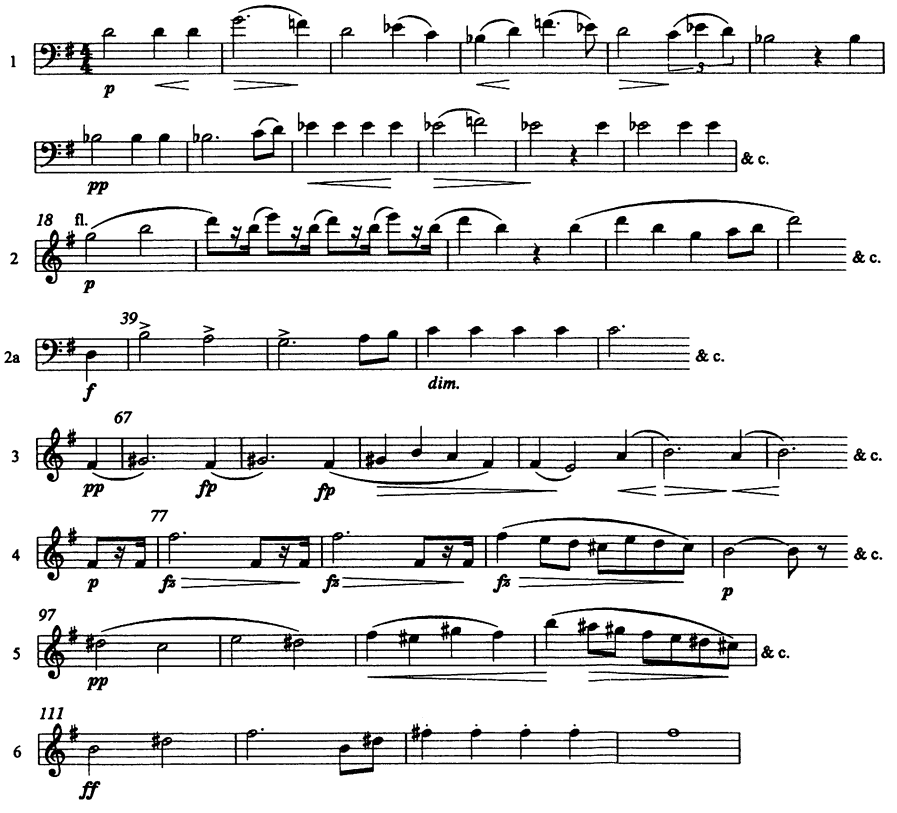
The key-schemes of the two expositions may be compared thus:

| | Intro. | First group | Second group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tchaikovsky: | E minor | E minor | (B minor)–D major–D major |
| Dvořák: | G minor | G major | (D major)–B minor–B major |

In these tonal designs, several common features become apparent. In addition to the opening in minor, mentioned previously, we have in both cases the ending in an abnormal key (neither dominant nor relative major) and a tonal cross-relation, B minor–D major (Tchaikovsky) and D major–B minor

Ex. 14.1

*b*. Dvořák, Symphony No. 8, first movement

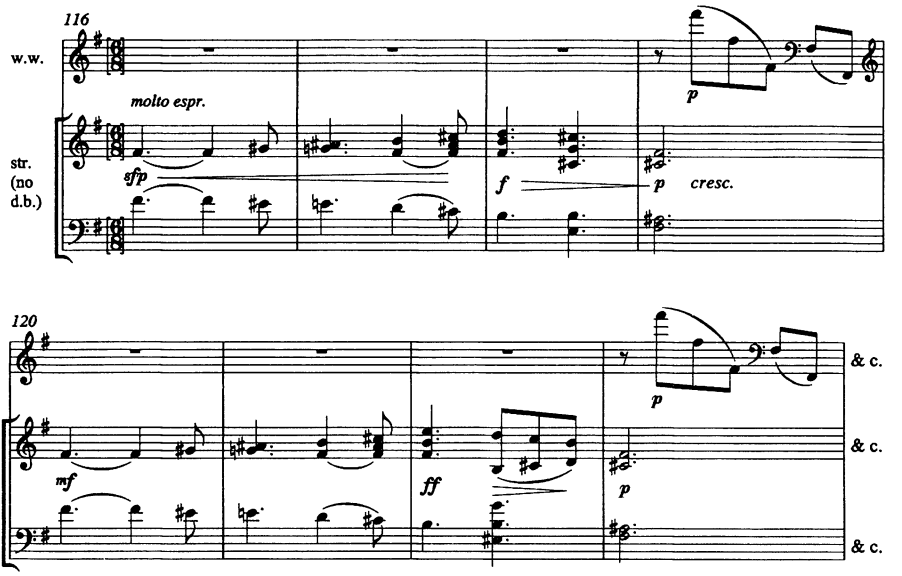



(Dvořák), in the second group. Both second groups begin with tonally unstable material in the dominant and proceed to the respective relative major or minor of this dominant. Without question, Dvořák's key-structure has inherently greater tension owing to the major-minor contrast between the introduction and the first subject, and again between the second and third theme of the second group.

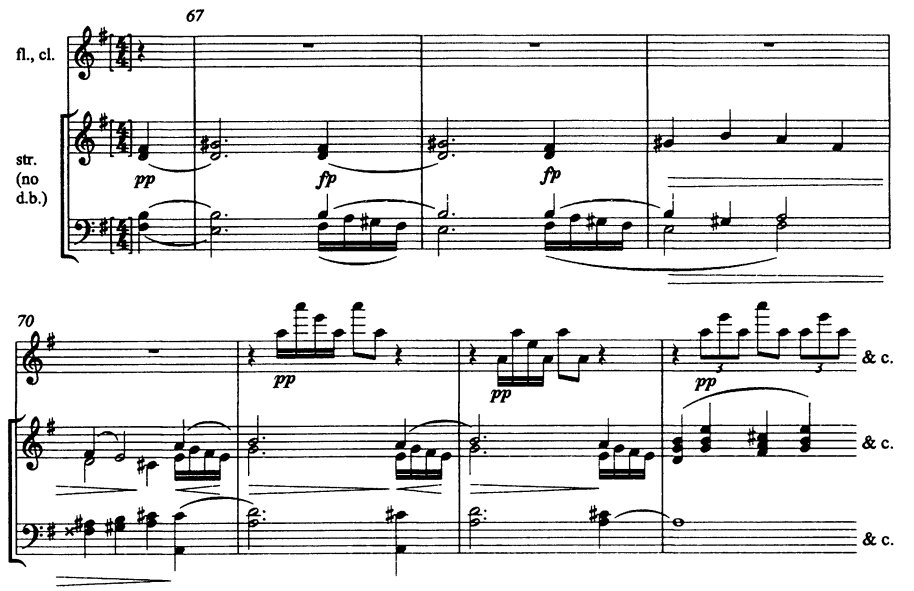
One theme of Dvořák's exposition has not yet been mentioned: the marchlike theme from m. 39 (Table 14.1, Theme 2*a*), a supplementary theme without Tchaikovskian counterpart. Why does Dvořák introduce this additional theme? Its powerful motivic resemblance to the second half of the introductory theme (mm. 7–10) provides an obvious answer: it binds together the first main section and the introduction. A further motivic bond can be found in the fanfare version of the main theme in the closing section (Ex. 14.1, Theme 6), which, in its second half, falls back upon the same passage of the

Ex. 14.2 *a.* Initial theme of second group in Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, first movement; *b.* The same in Dvořák, Symphony No. 8, first movement

*a*




*b*



introductory theme. Gerald Abraham's assertion that this introductory melody is 'unconnected with the rest of the thematic material' is an obvious mistake.[12]

While Tchaikovsky's introductory 'Fate' theme is heard only at the opening and then plays no further role in the movement, Dvořák's introductory theme is thus brought directly into the thematic process of the exposition. Moreover, Dvořák reintroduces the entire theme twice at the movement's formal seams—immediately after the exposition and, played by the trumpets in a triumphant tutti, between the development and the reprise.

Compared with the first movement of Tchaikovsky's symphony, whose numerous themes are neither interrelated nor developed from each other, but rather are decisively contrasted to each other, Dvořák's opening movement is thematically quite coherent. If Dvořák's movement, more than Tchaikovsky's, nevertheless gives the impression at first glance of being a rhapsodical succession of too many themes and motifs, this is a result of the different durations of the two movements: Tchaikovsky's requires sixteen minutes, while Dvořák's requires just ten. Tchaikovsky repeats each theme at least once, and then stretches it out widely before proceeding to the next idea. Dvořák, on the contrary, often forgoes immediate repetition and proceeds much more quickly from one theme to the next.

To be sure, some puzzling facts remain, for instance that—quite atypically for Dvořák—no consequences are drawn from the very first measures of the movement, the beginning of the introductory theme. And it cannot be altogether overlooked that the first movement of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony lacks the intensity of developing variation and thematic work to be found in his Seventh Symphony or F minor Trio. Of course, Brahmsian construction is not the only means by which a symphony can be written. However, the fact that Dvořák followed Tchaikovsky in so many respects, but not in what is perhaps the most important of his traits, namely the lyrical expansiveness so typical of his music, appears to me indeed as a problem with this symphony.

In the third movement, too, Dvořák follows Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony by writing an elegant waltz in the place of the usual scherzo—a waltz that, with its supple melody, reminds one of Parisian salons and Tchaikovskian ballets, far removed from the *furiant*-style scherzi of the Sixth and Seventh Symphonies. (Even in Tchaikovsky's ballets, however, there are not to be found many waltzes of such a filigreed, refined orchestration, and the other movements of Dvořák's symphony, too, show a skill at instrumentation rarely attained in Tchaikovsky's symphonies.)

As is well known, a crucial aspect of the whole conception of Tchaikovsky's

[12] 'Dvořák's Musical Personality', 235.

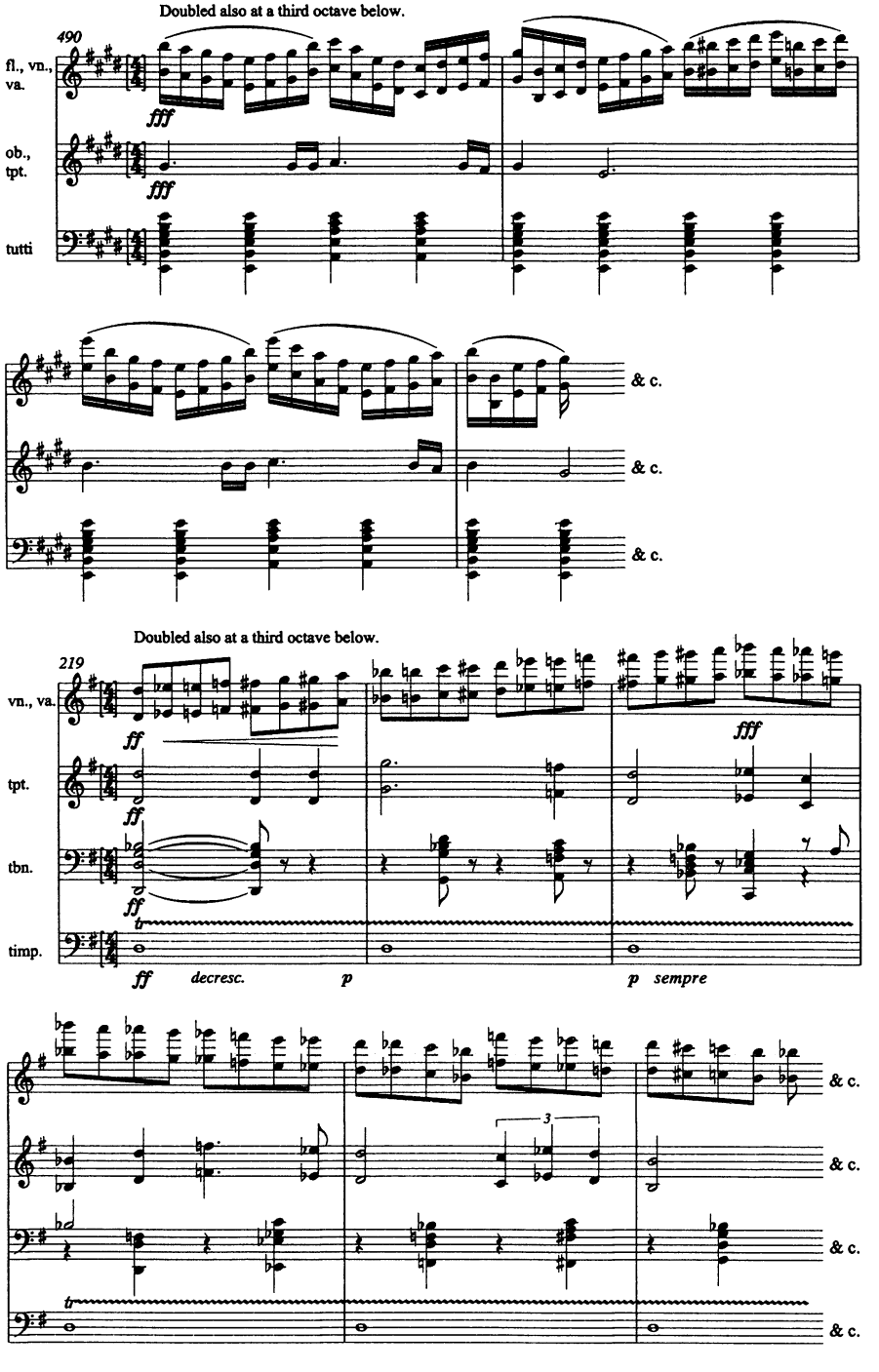
E minor Symphony is the cyclic connection of the four movements by means of the 'Fate' theme. The introductory theme of the first movement returns episodically in both middle movements and then, converted from minor to major, becomes the introductory theme of the finale. Within the first movement, the 'Fate' theme remains strangely isolated, and its reappearance in the middle movements is rather arbitrary and not internally motivated in purely musical terms. Certainly, according to Schumannian or Lisztian aesthetics these recurrences are poetic moments in their own right. However, within Dvořák's more conservative aesthetic such citations always have to be prepared and 'legitimized' on the level of motivic-thematic work. This is, at least, what Dvořák's early works show us quite clearly, and so do the later works, in which such reappearances of themes play an increasing role again (cf. the Ninth Symphony and the Cello Concerto).

In his own symphony, Dvořák completely relinquishes the repetition of the introductory theme in the other movements. I believe, however, that the afore-mentioned twofold repetition of the introductory theme at the seams of the opening movement is itself a reflection of Tchaikovsky's symphony: a projection, as it were, of the symphony's cyclic form on to a single movement. It seems to be no coincidence that Dvořák's introductory theme in its third and final appearance—after the development—is orchestrated in a manner very similar to that of the 'Fate' theme in its last appearance during the finale of Tchaikovsky's symphony (Ex. 14.3). The originally sombre, elegiac character of the theme is here converted to a triumphant climax, with trumpets playing the theme as a fortissimo solo and the violins and violas accompanying in a very similar manner with runs of notes in triple octave doubling.

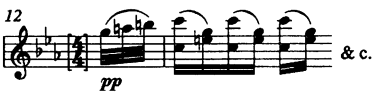
But Dvořák does also tie together the four movements of his Eighth Symphony in cyclic unity, though using means that are somewhat more subtle than those of Tchaikovsky. Thus the first two movements are clearly related to one another by a pastoral element: the pentatonic main theme of the first movement, played by the flute over a static background (Ex. 14.1, Theme 2), is unmistakably a nature theme resembling a bird-call, as is also the flute theme in the second movement (Ex. 14.4). The way in which the flute theme in the slow movement is eventually reduced to merely its descending fourths, repeated continuously with a 'natural stillness', gradually dissolving, relates directly to the reprise of the first movement, where the octave-leap theme (Ex. 14.1, Theme 4) is accompanied by a similar repeated bird-call motif of descending fourths in the flute, gradually dissolving. And in the finale one notices an echo of this pastoral sphere in the strikingly frequent use of the solo flute.

Motivically, the finale's main theme (Ex. 14.5*a*), with its ascending triad, refers quite clearly to the main theme of the first movement. Yet otherwise,

Ex. 14.3 *a*. Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, finale, coda; *b*. Dvořák, Symphony No. 8, first movement

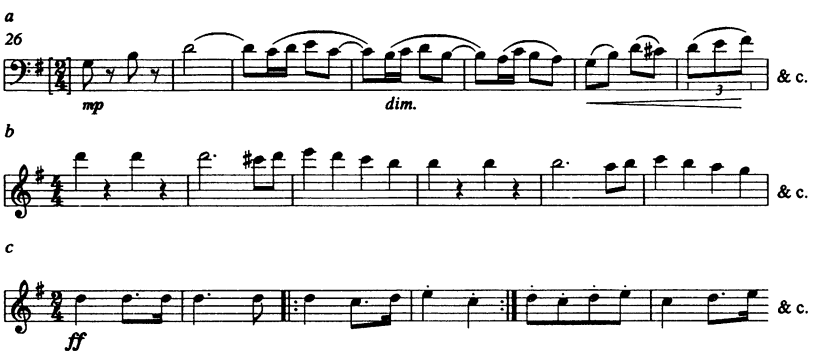


Ex. 14.4 Dvořák, Symphony No. 8, second movement




the themes and motifs of the various movements are not interrelated by the contours of their melodies (i.e. not by diastematic means), but rather by a certain resignation of melody, specifically the feature of pure note-repetition. Even the main theme of the Finale originally shows—as revealed by the sketches—no ascending triad at the beginning, but a simple note-repetition. (Compare its second sketch version, Ex. 14.5*b*.)[13] And then, when Dvořák decided upon the more melodic shape, he placed before the main theme a fanfare-type theme in the solo trumpets (Ex. 14.5*c*), composed essentially of note-repetitions.

Ex. 14.5 Dvořák, Symphony No. 8, finale: *a*. main theme, final version; *b*. main theme, second sketch version; *c*. opening fanfare added before main theme in final version

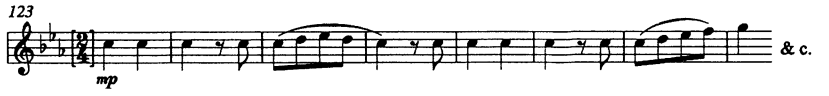



We have seen that in the first movement Dvořák takes from the introductory theme precisely the measures with note-repetitions as material for constructing themes later in the exposition (see Ex. 14.1, Themes 1, 2*a*, and 6). In this context the octave-leap theme (Theme 4) can also be understood as being constructed of note-repetitions, separated in this case into octaves. Compare, finally, the essential role of note-repetition in the second subject of the last movement (Ex. 14.6).

The foremost impression created by note-repetitions is that of rhythm. And in rhythm, the themes of the opening and closing movements are extraordi-

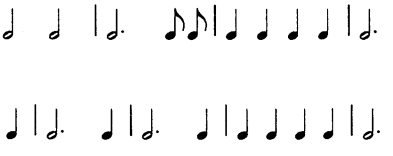
[13] Regarding the evolution of themes in the sketches, see John Clapham, *Antonín Dvořák: Musician and Craftsman* (New York, 1966), 32 f.

Ex. 14.6 Dvořák, Symphony No. 8, finale, second subject




narily homogenous. The majority of themes and motifs are based upon march rhythms such as those in Ex. 14.7. No two themes are exactly identical in terms of rhythm, nor do they altogether trace back to any one specific fundamental rhythm, but rather they function, in a quite abstract manner, as various realizations of the pure idea of the march—most concretely realized in Themes 2*a* and 6 from the opening movement (see Ex. 14.1), in the trumpet theme at the onset of the finale (Ex. 14.5*c*), and in the same movement's second subject (Ex. 14.6), which itself is a proper funeral march in C minor, the key of Beethoven's 'Eroica' march.[14]

Ex. 14.7 Dvořák, Symphony No. 8, typical march rhythms



The slow movement, too, despite its pastoral elements, has a march-like quality and even has been characterized by commentators as a funeral march, although the key of C major prevails. It is truly ingenious how Dvořák, here and in the entire movement, on the one hand plays the pastoral and march-like elements against one another, while on the other hand allowing them to pass into and interlock with one another until they are completely united at the end: the repeated descending fourth is at once both bird-call and trumpet signal. The supposed antitheses—military march and nature—penetrate one another as the 'naturalness' of the drum tattoo and trumpet signal becomes clearly obvious and the repetitive, non-developmental character of both corresponds with the bird-call. The inner relationship to the music of Gustav Mahler, whose First Symphony incidentally received its world première two weeks after the completion of Dvořák's Eighth, is not to be overlooked.

The comparison between the two symphonies of Dvořák and Tchaikovsky has shown that both works employ the march, and especially the funeral march, in order to create a cyclic unity among the four movements. But while

[14] Dvořák used C minor for a funeral march again later, in the symphonic poem *Holoubek* (The Wild Dove): Andante, marcia funebre. See Ch. 19.

Tchaikovsky attempts to achieve this unity with a single, solidly outlined theme, which does not always seem properly integrated within its context, Dvořák works in a much more abstract way with the basic idea of the march. In different ways, this march idea is present in most of the themes—especially in their rhythm, but also by means of instrumentation such as the soloistic use of trumpets and drums. Thematic work within the diastematic parameter—traditionally the most important field of play—moves to the background. More than any other factor, it is this, in my opinion, that engenders the difficulties one encounters when approaching this work with Brahmsian criteria. Like Schubert, Dvořák is essentially a rhythmist—a fact already demonstrated in his early D major String Quartet, where the rhythm, specifically that of the mazurka, likewise ties the four movements together in cyclic unity.[15]

My comparison with Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony has not, I hope, given rise to the impression that Dvořák simply entertained a foreign influence, thereby composing less originally in his Eighth Symphony. Precisely the opposite is the case. It is when critically dealing with Tchaikovsky's symphony that Dvořák shows his own originality most clearly, by the way he selects only certain aspects from Tchaikovsky and develops them into a unique conception quite typical of himself. His aim apparently is not imitation but rather 'to go one better than Tchaikovsky'. This of course does not mean that for us Dvořák's symphony is necessarily better than Tchaikovsky's, lacking as it does, for example, the overwhelming lyricism of the latter work. But in any case, the comparison may bring us a little closer to an understanding of Dvořák's musical thinking.

Finally, one could speculate whether it is only coincidence that Dvořák's next work in this genre, the 'New World' Symphony, is written in the same key as Tchaikovsky's Fifth, and begins with a true, and similarly sombre, slow introduction (though of the classical, theme-generating type). The reappearance of several themes in the last three movements, too, may be inspired by Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, although here Dvořák probably rather had in mind Beethoven's Ninth, an idea confirmed by the similarities between the openings to his and Beethoven's scherzo movements. Dvořák's G major Symphony, at least, proves that his relation to his Russian colleague was more than merely a matter of personal acquaintance or friendship, and reveals a new facet of Dvořák's participation in the ongoing 'discussion in notes' which is perhaps the essence of music history, especially in the nineteenth century.

[15] See Hartmut Schick, *Studien zu Dvořáks Streichquartetten* (Neue Heidelberger Studien zur Musikwissenschaft, ed. Ludwig Finscher and Reinhold Hammerstein, xvii; Laaber, Germany, 1990), 68 ff.