



BOOK I – UNIT 5 – AWARENESS AND FLEXIBILITY

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY : ANTONÍN DVORÁK



Born: September 8, 1841
Died: May 1, 1904 at age 62
Birthplace: Bohemia, Czechoslovakia
Musical Style: Romantic
Matb Songs: Largo (bk 1 and bk 3)

Family: Dvořák's parents were Frantisek and Anna. Antonín was the oldest and had nine sisters and brothers. His love of music diverted him from an expected life as a butcher similar to his father.

He learned to play the violin at a young age before going to school. He also learned to play the viola. Dvořák played at various inns, in theatre bands and festive occasions. As a student he was too poor to afford a piano so he would practice at friends' homes, sometimes overstaying his welcome.

Antonín was a struggling musician and composer for some time, not finding success in the operas he wrote and having limited resources. He eventually found his way to more prosperous times and married a former piano student named Anna. Sadly, they lost three of their young children to illnesses including the chicken pox and a poisoning accident, all within a few years.

At the age of 34, Antonín received a grant from the Austrian government and began publishing his compositions. He travelled to England and across Europe gaining acclaim. Dvořák was invited to be the director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City in 1892 by a wealthy patroness named Jeannette Thurber. He was reluctant to go but was offered a staggering \$15,000 which his family urged him to take. While in the U.S., he wrote the Symphony in E Minor, Op. 95, (New World Symphony) and other compositions inspired by the music he heard across his travels in the United States. An African-American student introduced Dvořák to spirituals which is said to have influenced the music he wrote in the Symphony including "Largo." He became homesick and returned to his country after three years in the United States.

He was said to be a very humble and religious man and had a good family life. His music drew on Czech folk music, with lots of rhythmic variety and inventive melodies. He inspired a sense of Czech nationalism. Antonín Dvořák wrote nine symphonies, many choral pieces, overtures, concertos, operas and other chamber music.