



Antonin Dvorak: A Short Biography

Antonin Dvorak, arguably the greatest of the Czech composers, was born on September 8, 1841, in a little Bohemian village in what is today the Czech Republic. He grew up liking folk songs, and very early in his life, he showed that he had musical talent. Dvorak took violin lessons from a local schoolmaster. Later he went to Prague, the capital, to study the organ and music composition. He was able to support himself as a violinist and piano teacher. He grew more and more famous, especially after he composed his Slavonic Dances. He also wrote more musical compositions like operas and symphonies.

While he was teaching composition at the Prague Conservatory, he was invited to come to America to become the artistic director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, teaching three hours a day for eight months and conducting eight concerts annually. The salary was \$15,000 a year. At the time, Dvorak was making \$500 a month in Prague. Dvorak accepted the invitation. He came to America with his wife and two of their six children.

While in America, Dvorak wrote some of his best-loved works, including Symphony No. 9 (*From the New World*), which premiered in Carnegie Hall. He also wrote a cello concerto, "The American Flag" cantata, the "American" string quartet, and another string quartet. He and his family spent the summer of 1893 in a tiny Czech community in Spillville, Iowa, on the banks of the Turkey River. He also visited the Minneapolis, Minnesota area and Minnehaha Falls.

In 1894, Dvorak returned home and for the last ten years of his life he continued to compose. He was famous, but he had money problems because he sold his compositions for so little that he had nothing to live on. He died in 1904.