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Afterglows & Afterimages

Reflections:
Dvořák / Knapik



Warsaw ——— 23 November 2025

Reflections: Dvořák / Knapik

23 November (Sunday) — 6.00 pm

Warsaw Philharmonic
Concert Hall
5 Jasna Street
Warsaw

Honorary patronage: His Excellency Břetislav Dančák
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
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Concert programme

Antonín Dvořák

(1841–1904)

Symphony No. 9 in E minor,
“From the New World”, Op. 95
(1893)

Adagio. Allegro molto

Largo

Molto vivace

Allegro con fuoco

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Eugeniusz Knapik

(b. 1951)

Beauty Radiated in Eternity

for choir and orchestra

(2012)

words: Hafiz Shirazi (1320–1389)

English translation by:

Mahmood Jamal (1948–2020)

Performers:

**Silesian Philharmonic Choir
and Symphony Orchestra**

Eugene Tzigane

conductor

Jarosław Wolanin

artistic director of the choir

Reflections: Dvořák / Knapik

Antonín Dvořák, Symphony No. 9 in E minor, “From the New World”, Op. 95 (1893)

At the peak of his career, in 1892–95, Antonín Dvořák took up the position of Director of the New York National Conservatory of Music. American hopes related to this nomination were more than fulfilled: the Czech master not only breathed new life into music pedagogy in the USA, but also composed the first “American” musical masterpieces, including the String Quartet in F major, Op. 96 (1893), the Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104 (1894) and, last but not least, Symphony No. 9 in E minor, “From the New World”, Op. 95 (1893).

It was composed in the town of Spillville, Iowa, where Dvořák and his family spent an idyllic holiday in a colony of Czech emigrants in the summer of 1893. The symphony grows out of his delight with the great outdoors of the American prairies, which he admired during his journey from New York. However, to an even greater extent, it is an attempt to recognise the spirit of nascent American culture. According to Dvořák, the music of the New World, following the example of European musical nationalism, should draw from folklore, that is primarily from African American Spirituals (which Harry T. Burleigh, an Afro-American student, sang to him – everyone could enter the New York Conservatory, regardless of gender and skin colour) and Native North American songs. To his surprise, Dvořák discovered that both of these indigenous traditions use the pentatonic scale. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that it also influences the themes of his work.

This most famous of Dvořák's symphonies is also unique in terms of the art of composing, as Dvořák employed the cyclical technique: the main theme of the first movement returns in each subsequent one. Before the final coda, motifs from all three previous movements are recalled (however, in the *Largo* Dvořák does not employ the theme, but the preceding mysterious chordal introduction).

The New York premiere, on 16 December 1893, was the greatest triumph in Dvořák's career. Each movement was followed by endless ovations. Soon afterwards, Symphony No. 9 could be heard in concert halls all over the world.

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Eugeniusz Knapik, *Beauty Radiated in Eternity* (2012)

In this choral cantata, Eugeniusz Knapik reached for the poetry of Hafez, a Persian mystic who has fascinated Europeans in their quest to find certain universal and invigorating spiritual orders behind the veil of exoticism since the times of Goethe and the concept of *Weltliteratur* he coined. The Polish listener will also certainly think of Szymanowski – not only his two cycles of songs to words by Hafez, but also his Symphony No. 3 to words by another Sufi poet, Rumi. Knapik's new romanticism is in fact a reference, in new conditions and on his own terms, to the ecstatic musical mysticism of the early twentieth century – by Mahler, Scriabin and Szymanowski.

Hafez's text speaks of beauty as an emanation of love drawing angels and man to God, provided that the latter is ready to surrender to the divine impulse and give up the rebellious mind, which instead of uniting us with the source of being, isolates us from it and tempts us with its power. Knapik's half-hour, one-movement composition consists of three internal phases. The poem is presented in its entirety in the first phase. This phase's beginning resembles a ship getting wind in its sails, going in circles three times, each circle being wider than the previous one (the initial motif returns three times as well). Standing out against a truly Klimt-like wealth of shapes and colours, the modest and sad music of the stanza talks of the trap of the human mind. The instrumental middle phase, maintained in the style of a ruthless *moto perpetuo*, reveals the inhuman mechanism of a world detached from the transcendent source (at the beginning of this phase, twelve-tone chords appear, symbolising the sterile speculation of twentieth-century music). The final phase comes after the catastrophe of the second one. In the final phase, fragments of Hafez's poem return (as a reminiscence, a warning, a dream, a vision of renewal?), while the music reverses the narrative course of the first phase: first, there is a stanza about the mind and at the very end – ecstatic praise of divine Love and Beauty. In the score, Knapik distinguishes these two words, BEAUTY + LOVE, with capital letters.

Marcin Trzęsiok



The Silesian Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra

The orchestra has been in existence continuously since 1945. From the very beginning of its activity, the orchestra has participated in many Polish and foreign music festivals. The orchestra has given world premieres of over eighty works and it has undertaken over two hundred foreign tours, giving concerts throughout Europe as well as in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The orchestra's recording output includes over forty recordings for Polish and global labels. One of its greatest achievements in this field is the recording of all symphonic, vocal and orchestral and cantata and oratorio works by K. Szymanowski.

Eugene Tzigane – conductor



Neda Navaee

A conductor of striking artistry and magnetic presence, acclaimed for his stylistic range, sonic clarity and unique interpretational perspective. Of

American-Japanese heritage and based in Europe, Tzigane brings a unique musical voice to his work on the podium – blending precision with imagination, tradition with a fearless spirit of discovery. His ability to draw both raw energy and subtle nuance from orchestras has made him a sought-after guest conductor with leading ensembles across four continents.



Silesian Philharmonic Choir

The ensemble is one of the oldest Polish philharmonic choirs, and was established in 1974 at the initiative of Karol Stryja. Its repertoire covers several hundred pieces with orchestral accompaniment and hundreds of a cappella compositions. The greatest achievements of the Silesian Philharmonic Choir include the Polish premieres of E. Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* and of A. Schnittke's Concerto for Choir, as well as the first liturgical performance of W. Kilar's *Missa pro pace*. The choir has released album recordings of K. Szymanowski's complete vocal and instrumental works, as well as some choral masterpieces by H.M. Górecki.

Jarosław Wolanin – the choir's chief conductor and artistic director



© Karol Fatyga

Since 2001, Jarosław Wolanin has been professionally associated with the Silesian Philharmonic Choir, since 2009 as the ensemble's artistic director and

conductor. Together with the ensemble, he has performed many premieres of the latest Polish music. Jarosław Wolanin gives concerts not only in Poland but also abroad, performing in Germany, the Czech Republic and France. In 2014, he was awarded a Silver Badge of Honour for Services to the Silesian Voivodeship, and in 2020 – a Gloria Artis Bronze Medal for Services to Culture. He is a Doctor of Arts in Conducting.

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