

### *Three Slavonic Dances*

**Antonin Dvořák**

Following the appearance of the *Slavonic Dances, Op. 46*, Dvořák's international reputation was firmly established. Prior to that time, he was relatively unknown outside his native Czech homeland. It was Johannes Brahms who called his publisher, Fritz Simrock of Berlin, to the attention of this "decidedly talented person, and besides that, a poor man!" Dvořák's first important success came at age thirty-four, when Simrock published his *Airs from Moravia* in 1878. Pleased with their collaboration, and undoubtedly inspired by the enormous popularity of Brahms' own *Hungarian Dances*, he asked Dvořák to write a set of Czech dances. The piano duet version of the first eight dances, Op. 36, was completed between March 18 and May 7, 1878, and orchestrated by August 22. A triumphant (and lucrative) success, Simrock urged Dvořák to write yet another set. The composer at first hesitated "to do the same thing twice is devilish difficult!" However, in the summer of 1886, between June 4 and July 9, he composed Op. 72, eight more dances for piano duet.

Unlike Brahms, Dvořák "did not imitate folk tunes, he created in the spirit of them," wrote Alec Robertson. Karel Hoffmeister suggests that: "They (the dances) spring directly from the soul of the people." They also spring more from the soul of Dvořák who brilliantly stylized the folk music of his native land. Creating original melodies, he drew inspiration and direction from the wealth of influences of his childhood days in a Bohemian village.

Immediately engaging and irresistible to enjoy, these *Slavonic Dances* are best described by Dvořák himself: "They will bring the house down...they sound like the very Devil!"