

FAME V  
Lesson 5  
February 2009

**Antonin Dvorak (antoe-noon dvor-zjak) 1841-1904**

Props	Costume
1 .Leave Seurat prints out. 2. Two pictures of a faucet one listed as staccato the other legato.	1. Peasant Blouse 2. Long full skirt 3. scarf for head

Sometimes, when we are on a picnic, our stomachs are very full, we just sit and talk one tell stories or jokes. When people make us laugh by funny things they say or the jokes they tell, we say that that person has a “good sense of humor.”

Our music for today has that word – **Humor** – in the title. The music is called *Humoresque*.

(*Music on* ) Imagine that we are in a park (indicate Seurat’s print) listening to a band concert. Why wouldn’t we have just brought our radios or I pods? Well we didn’t have those things in the 1880’s which is when this painting was done. How would you describe the way it felt to be here in this place to your friends the next day? (*Happy, sad, full of good humor, light etc. Music off*)

Our composer was a man who was just like his music – very happy. If you are a composer, and you are satisfied and happy about your life in this world, how could you let people know how you feel? (*Be creating happy music.*)

Unlike many of the composers and artists we have studied in FAME, Antonin Dvorak was a happily married family man who had a happy childhood. Although he worked very hard to earn a living while young, he achieved recognition and wealth in his lifetime.

During Dvorak’s lifetime, the Czechoslovakians were struggling under the rule of the Austrians. Dvorak’s works were heavily influenced by musical themes and dances of his homeland, Bohemia. At this time there was a general movement by composers in Europe called “nationalism.” Can you guess what nationalism means? (*Expression of loyalty and devotion to a country.*) What songs do you know which express “nationalism” (*America the Beautiful, National Anthem, Yankee Doodle Dandy.*) Dvorak used his music to show his love for his country, Bohemia and was inspired by the Bohemian spirit.

Dvorak was born into a large family. He was the oldest of eight children. His father was a butcher and an innkeeper, but also in charge of the town band which he had organized. A kindly man, Antonin’s father would often provide food and lodging to travelers who were frequently impoverished musicians. The Czech’s love music so Antonin’s father would call his band together for these visitors and an instant “jam” session would begin. Young Antonin enjoyed the gaiety and joy of these musical parties. He learned to play the violin and was often “shown off” to guests or allowed to join in the group festivities.

Though his family had planned on him becoming a butcher, he left home to study at the

Prague Organ School. He supported himself by playing the violin or viola in bands and orchestras. At one point, he shared a bedroom with four other aspiring composers, a medical student and a tourist guide. An ancient piano was the prize of the apartment, and the four musicians shared it, vying for rehearsal time.

The women he loved and eventually married, Anna, bore him many children and was his strength and solace in life. He loved being a family man and certainly waited long enough to do so. He refused to marry until he could support a wife, so the wedding was held off for 8 years. He and Anna had nine children. The first 3 children died, but 6 others were born to the ecstatic Dvorak.

In 1891, Antonin Dvorak came to America to become the director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. He was invited by Mrs. Thurber who liked the nationalist style of his music. She wanted to encourage Americans to begin composing an American style of music. While in the US, he discovered Black spirituals and American Indian music. So, as he composed, those sounds and rhythms were incorporated with his own Czech folk origins. His New World Symphony, one of his most famous works, offers his interpretation of America. Dvorak was caught up by the energy and vitality of the country and wrote, "It seems to me that American soil will influence my thought beneficially ... something of the kind is already to be heard in my new symphony." Although he loved this "new world" of America, he missed his wife and children dreadfully and returned after three years to Prague, where he became the Director of the Conservatory 1895.

Nine year later he died at home, probably of a stroke. Dvorak created over 100 compositions including operas (many based on Czech folk tales.) and symphonies, concertos, chamber music, dances and many other types of music.

Let's listen once more to **Humoresque #7**(Dvorak in Prague #4)

A humoresque is a type of instrumental composition supposedly of a wayward or whimsical nature.

What instruments do you hear? (Violin, cello, flute)

Is this music the same all the way through? Do you notice changes? (*First section is jerky, with separated notes, and that the second part is smooth, with notes flowing into each other.*) **Show visual of faucet.**

Remember that first section is staccato it's like a drippy faucet –it drips, and then there is a silence, drips again, and so on. The second and third part is legato; the water runs free with no silence between the notes.

A humoresque usually has a three-part song with three different melody lines. This one goes ABACABA.

Let's listen to Dvorak's **Slavonic Dance in C Major, Op 72. No7**

(Dvorak in Prague#11)

*Play a minute to show how he expressed his own Bohemian spirit of nationalism.*

How does this music make you feel? (*like dancing*)

Was this performed by a few instruments or a great big orchestra?

This is one of Dvorak's nationalistic pieces.

**Play second CD with New world Symphony**

Can you hear how different all three of these pieces are? They all reflect the different styles that Dvorak was influenced by during his life.

Shortly before the premiers of the “New World Symphony”, Dvorak wrote, “I am satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies. These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition, to be developed in the United States.”