



## **Antonín Dvořák – *The noon witch*, symphonic poem Op. 108**

After returning home from the United States, Dvořák decided to devote himself to the symphonic poem creating, between 1896 and 1897, four compositions (*The golden spinning wheel*, *The spirit of the waters*, *The noon witch* and *The dove of the forest*) inspired by the popular ballads of the Bohemian writer Karel Jaromír Erben. *The noon witch* tells a macabre story: the protagonist is a mother who scolds her capricious son by invoking the arrival of Polednice, the midday witch who kidnaps children. In no time at all, the threat becomes reality and the old witch materializes on the doorstep, ready to take the child away. The mother, desperate, to protect her son hugs him in her arms with such enthusiasm as to involuntarily suffocate him. In the musical transposition of this ballad with noir hues, Dvořák uses orchestral solutions of particular effectiveness and sonorous charm: from the whims of the whining child sung several times by the oboe, to the disturbing appearance of the witch underlined by the dark timbre of the bass clarinet on the mysterious accompaniment of the strings, up to the frantic dance of the witch whose mocking theme returns to ominously sign the composition.

## **Franz Schubert – *Symphony No. 2 in B flat major D. 125***

While there is no doubt that the first symphonies composed by Schubert between the ages of sixteen and eighteen are attributable to an apprenticeship gained in the bed of Viennese classicism, it is also true that an original and very personal symphonic sensitivity can already be found in them. An example of this is the Symphony n. 2 in B flat major which engages Schubert between the end of 1814 and the first months of 1815 for a good fifteen weeks, a very long time compared to the sudden gestations of the First and Third, born in a few days. The structure chosen is the usual one: an introductory Adagio followed by an Allegro in sonata form, an Andante, here in the form of a theme with variations, an eighteenth-century style Minuet and a final Presto. But while on the one hand Schubert shows himself respectful of classical conventions - especially in the central movements - on the other he shows initiative and desire to experiment in the harmonic and formal field, through the original and unexpected modulations of the first movement and the marked dynamic and timbral contrasts of the matrix Beethovenian in the last movement.

## **Antonín Dvořák – *Symphony No. 5 in F major Op. 76***

During the summer of 1875 Dvořák focused on the composition of Symphony No. 5 in F major, published by the Simrock publisher with the opera number 76. The composer needed only a few weeks of work to create that new symphony which, from its debut - March 25, 1879 in Prague - earned the nickname 'Pastorale' because of the graceful and serene tones that characterize it. It is no coincidence that it is a good-natured motif, which then assumes the appearance of a cheerful fanfare, to open the first movement - Allegro ma non molto - accompanied by a second motif, of a bucolic stamp, in tune with the strings. Among the folds of the sad and painful theme of the Andante con moto we find the imprint of Bohemian folk song, an essential and peculiar element of Dvořák's writing, as well as in the lively dance motif of the Scherzo in which ever-changing orchestral colors swarm. In the final movement, however, there is an unexpected reversal of direction. Dvořák chooses for the fourth movement a new sonic guise starting from the dark and peremptory attack, destined to dramatize a symphonic course in which, however, there is also space for an oasis of pure lyricism.