

István Kertész (August 28, 1929 – April 16, 1973)

was an internationally acclaimed Hungarian orchestral and operatic conductor who, throughout his brief but distinguished career led many of the world's great orchestras, including the Cleveland, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Detroit, San Francisco and Minnesota Orchestras in the United States, as well as the

London Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic, and L'Orchestre de le Suisse Romande. His orchestral repertoire numbered over 450 works from all periods, and was matched by a repertoire of some sixty operas ranging from Mozart, Verdi, Puccini and Wagner to the more contemporary Prokofiev, Bartók, Britten, Kodály, Poulenc and Janáček. Kertész was part of a rich musical tradition that produced fellow Hungarian conductors, János Ferencsik, Eugene Ormandy, George Szell, János Fürst, and Sir Georg Solti.

On April 16, 1973, while on a concert tour, Kertész drowned while swimming off the coast of Israel at Herzliya.[4] He had been recording what would become a legendary version of Brahms' Variations on a Theme by Haydn, as well as the complete Brahms symphonies. After his untimely death, and in tribute to him, the Vienna Philharmonic finished recording the Haydn Variations.

Kertész was survived by his wife, operatic soprano Edith Kertész-Gabry, his children, Gabor, Peter, and Kathrin, his mother, Margit Muresian Kertész Halmos, and his sister, a graphic artist, Vera Kertész.



Bedřich Smetana was one of the great composers of his country's history and one of the leaders of the movement toward musical nationalism. His father was a violin teacher who gave Bedřich his first lessons and referred him to keyboard, harmony, and composition lessons when the boy requested them. His father tried to get Bedřich to apply himself in academics, but Bedřich was too focused on music to be a good student.

Bedřich Kittl, director of the Prague Conservatory, in 1844 found Smetana a job as a music teacher to the family of Count Leopold Thun while continuing music studies. He remained with the count for three and a half years, but he quit to undertake a concert tour, which turned out to be a financial failure.

Franz Liszt aided Smetana in finding a publisher for some early piano music and in 1848, Smetana founded a successful piano school.

Although he established a strong local reputation as a pianist, his piano compositions (mostly lighter works) did not earn him any special distinction as a composer.

In 1860, the Austro-Hungarian Empire granted internal political autonomy to Bohemia. A movement began to search for a genuine Czech voice in arts, including the establishment of a national theater. In 1862-1863, Smetana composed *The Brandenburgers* in Bohemia, his first opera, which was a success at its premiere on January 5, 1866. His next opera was *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*), his most famous and enduring opera today, but a failure when it premiered on May 30, 1866.

In 1866, Smetana became conductor of the Provisional Theater, re-forming its administration and attempting to raise standards. His next opera, *Dalibor* (1871), was criticized for its Wagnerian elements. He had also written *Libuše*, but could find no producer. But in 1874, he had a large success with a light, popular opera, *The Two Widows*.

However, a severe whistling in the ears (graphically depicted in his autobiographical string quartet *From My Life*) led to deafness by the end of that year, symptoms of tertiary syphilis. He continued to compose and wrote his orchestral masterpiece *Má Vlast* (*My Country*) from 1874 to 1879. Three more operas were premiered successfully, including *Libuše*, but the last was *The Devil's Wall* (1882). By now, Smetana was seriously ill. The brain damage from syphilis led to madness, and he was confined to an asylum where he died. National mourning was proclaimed and he was given a burial at the Vyshehrad, one of the national sites depicted in *Má Vlast*.

Antonín Leopold Dvořák

After Bedřich Smetana, he was the second Czech composer to achieve worldwide recognition. Following Smetana's nationalist example, Dvořák frequently employed aspects, specifically rhythms, of the folk music of Moravia and his native Bohemia. Dvořák's own style has been described as "the fullest recreation of a national idiom with that of the symphonic tradition, absorbing folk influences and finding effective ways of using them".

Dvořák displayed his musical gifts at an early age, being an apt violin student from age six. The first public performances of his works were in Prague in 1872 and, with special success, in 1873, when he was age 31. Seeking recognition beyond the Prague area, he first submitted a score of his *First Symphony* to a prize competition in Germany, but he did not win, and the manuscript, not returned, was lost until rediscovered many decades later. Then in 1874 he first made a submission for the Austrian State Prize for Composition, including scores of two further symphonies and other works. Brahms, unbeknownst to Dvořák, was the leading member of the jury and was highly impressed. The prize was awarded to Dvořák for 1874 and again in 1876 and in 1877, when Brahms and the prominent critic Eduard Hanslick, also a member of the jury, made themselves known to him. Brahms recommended Dvořák to his publisher, Simrock, who soon afterward commissioned what became the *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46. These were highly praised by the Berlin music critic Louis Ehlert in 1878, the sheet music (of the original piano 4-hands version) had excellent sales, and Dvořák's international reputation at last was launched.

Dvořák's first piece of a religious nature, his setting of *Stabat Mater*, was premiered in Prague in 1880. It was very successfully performed in London in 1883, leading to many other performances in the United Kingdom and United States. In his career, Dvořák made nine invited visits to England, often conducting performances of his own works. His *Seventh Symphony* was written for London. Visiting Russia in March 1890, he conducted concerts of his own music in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In 1891 Dvořák was appointed as a professor at the Prague Conservatory. In 1890-91, he wrote his *Dumky Trio*, one of his most successful chamber music pieces. In 1892, Dvořák moved to the United States and became the director of the National Conservatory of Music of America in New York City. While in the United States, Dvořák wrote his two most successful orchestral works. The *Symphony From the New World* spread his reputation worldwide. His *Cello Concerto* is one of the most highly regarded of all cello concerti. Also, he wrote his *American String Quartet*, his most appreciated piece of chamber music. But shortfalls in payment of his salary, along with increasing recognition in Europe and an onset of homesickness, led him to leave the United States in 1895 and return to Bohemia.

Dvořák's nine operas other than his first, *Alfred*, have librettos in Czech and were intended to convey Czech national spirit, as were some of his choral works. By far the most successful of the operas is *Rusalka*. Among his smaller works, the seventh Humoresque and the song "Songs My Mother Taught Me" are also widely performed and recorded. He has been described as "arguably the most versatile... composer of his time".

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Music of Smetana and Dvorak

Istvan Kertesz conducts The Israel Philharmonic

The Bartered Bride

1-Overture 6:20

2- Polka 5:30

3- Furiant 2:15

4- Vltava (Moldau) 11:20

Slavonic Dances

5 -Op. 45 No. 1 in C 3:45

6 -Op. 46 No. 3 in A Flat 4:45

7 -Op. 46 No. 8 in C Minor 4:10

8 -Op. 72 No. 2 in E Minor 5:40

9- Op. 72 No. 1 in B 4:20

Total Time: 48:05

Transferred from a London 4-track tape
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