

Erich Leinsdorf was one of the most respected (if not always well-liked) European-born conductors and music directors to achieve prominence in America after World War II. He was an acclaimed operatic conductor, whose recordings of *Turandot* and *Madama Butterfly* from the late '50s remain among the most popular in the catalog; his reputation as a conductor of orchestral music hasn't survived quite as well.

He was born Erich Landauer in Vienna, Austria, and by the age of 5 was enrolled in a local music school. He studied music at the University of Vienna and the Vienna Conservatory, making his conducting debut at the Musikvereinsaal upon graduation. Leinsdorf became the assistant conductor of the Workers' Chorus in Vienna in 1933, and a year later successfully auditioned before Bruno Walter and Arturo Toscanini at the Salzburg Festival, where he was appointed Toscanini's assistant.

Leinsdorf's American debut took place at the Metropolitan Opera when he conducted Wagner's *Die Walküre* on January 21, 1938. His success with Wagnerian operas led to his appointment at the Met in 1939 as head of the company's German repertoire. While at the Met he began to develop a reputation as a strict taskmaster, requiring increased rehearsal time from his singers and extremely precise fidelity to the written score from musicians; although audiences generally appreciated the results, many of the performers he worked with resented his demands.

He took American citizenship in 1942. The following year he was appointed music director of the Cleveland Orchestra, but was soon inducted into the United States Army. Discharged in 1944, he returned to the Met. During 1945 and 1946, he also conducted the Cleveland Orchestra on several occasions, and returned to Europe where, as one of a group of major Austrian-born conductors who had no connections with the Nazis, he was engaged to conduct the Vienna Philharmonic. He found his reception in his home city, destitute in the immediate wake of World War II, to be less than entirely cordial.

By 1947, Leinsdorf was back in the United States as music director of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in upstate New York, a post he held until 1955. Leinsdorf served as music director of the New York City Opera for part of 1956, before returning to the Met as a conductor and musical consultant. In 1962, Leinsdorf acceded to one of the most prestigious musical posts in America, succeeding Charles Munch as music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Leinsdorf's tenure at Boston was extremely productive, but stormy. He found the political considerations of a music directorship -- juggling the demands of individual musicians, their unions and existing work and rehearsal rules, and the board of directors -- to be a distraction from his musical goals. Leinsdorf also became known for open criticism his musicians' educational shortcomings, and of errors made by his fellow conductors and by editors of musical scores.

He resigned the Boston post with the 1968-1969 season, happy, in his own words, to have exited with his health intact. Leinsdorf conducted opera and concert performances throughout the United States and Europe for the next two decades. In 1978, he took up his first permanent post in Europe, becoming principal conductor of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, a post he held until 1980. In 1976, he published *Cadenza: A Musical Career*, a memoir as notable for its candid, brutally honest assessments of himself and his fellow musicians as for its biographical contents.



Dvorak Symphony No. 9 in E minor



Erich Leinsdorf - Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

Dvorák composed this work in 1893; Anton Seidl conducted the premiere with the New York Philharmonic Society on December 16, 1893.

His most popular work from his time spent in America was the swan-song symphony he subtitled *From the New World*. Chauvinists among us still claim that its themes are either Amerindian or African-American, which Dvorák refuted in 1900: "Omit the nonsense about my having made use of 'American' motifs....I tried only to write in the spirit of those national melodies." This dust-up managed to ignore influences both stronger and more subtle. Dvorák already knew Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, completed in 1888, and he likewise used a motto-theme to link the four movements in his symphony in E minor. The introduction can be made to sound a lot more Tchaikovskian, indeed, than a subsequent theme can be made to sound like "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," as alleged. Beyond the Slavic gravitas of both symphonies, however, Dvorák's musical signature was intrinsically Czech, even in the Largo movement that represented, he once said, Hiawatha at the grave site of Minnehaha (a quasi-spiritual, "Goin' Home" text was created post facto by a white American pupil). By the time he heard any Amerind music, during the summer of 1893 near a Czech settlement at Spillville, Iowa, Dvorák had finished the Ninth Symphony. From the structural standpoint, two sonata-form movements (with an exposition repeat in the first) bracket two movements in song form (ABA), all of them with brief introductions and codas.

The 2/4 Allegro molto has an Adagio preface in 4/8 time. Horns introduce the motto theme, answered by clarinets and bassoons, then strings.

Flutes and oboes play a melody in G minor before the "Swing Low" closing subject shifts from minor to G major. Sectional development omits the G minor tune; reprise and coda are distillations.

The Largo begins in D flat major, far from single sharped E minor. A plaintive English horn melody dominates both here and later on. In between a C sharp minor section marked *Un poco più mosso*, winds introduce two themes, more palpitant than the D flat section's big tune, before the motto makes a sinister appearance.

Song sections marked *Scherzo: Molto vivace*, in E minor, pay homage less to Indian pow-wows than to the scherzo movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. A briefer subject in E major recalls the G major closing theme of the first movement, followed by the motto. The *Poco sostenuto* Trio is pure Czech, beginning in C major, with a G major second theme related to the Beethoven rhythm in sections A and A.

Allegro con fuoco is the marking of the final movement with a martial main theme in E minor for horns and trumpets. The clarinet counters with a nostalgic sub-theme, after which flutes and fiddles play a closing subject in G major. The development combines music from previous movements with the main theme of movement 4. Following the recap, a Grand Coda ends with a fortissimo restatement of the motto, then a diminuendo to pianissimo on the final chord.



Dvorak Symphony No. 9 Erich Leinsdorf - LAPO

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- 1- Adagio-Allegro molto 8:24
- 2- Largo 10:38
- 3 - Molto vivace - Poco sostenuto 7:05
- 4 - Allegro con fuoco 10:15
- Total Time 36:22

Recorded by Capital records 1958

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