

Let's Listen 8

The pieces for these lessons are taken from the collection **100 Popular Classics**, a set of 5 CDs, issued by Castle Communication, Catalogue number MBS CD 517, available from HMV. However, the pieces featured are also available on many other recordings, and may already be in your school.

Largo (from Symphony 9 in E Minor, From the New World)

Composer: Antonin Dvorák 1841-1904, Bohemia

Background Information for the Teacher

In 1892, the Bohemian musician Antonin Dvorák arrived in New York to take up the post of Director of the newly established Conservatory of Music. His arrival was timed to fit in with the celebrations to mark the fourth centenary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492. As well as being head of the Conservatory, Dvorák was also required to teach composition and to arrange concerts of his own compositions. Shortly after his arrival in New York, the composer began work on his ninth symphony. He named it ***From the New World***, and many of the tunes in it, while being original compositions, are evocative of the Native American and Negro Spiritual melodies that he heard in America. The composition was a great success when it was first performed in Carnegie Hall.

Dvorák was always very lonely for his native country, and in 1895, he returned to take up the position of Director of the Prague Conservatory of Music.

Largo is the second movement in the Ninth Symphony. The musical term *Largo* means *Slow and Broad*, and it describes the way the music should be played.

Largo from the New World Symphony

This article is one of a series that first appeared in INTO InTouch magazine in 2002-2003 written by Mary Ryng

Introducing the music

Get the class talking about the way that music can convey a mood. Some music (for example the *Radetzky March* or *Allegro from Spring*) is happy and celebratory. Some music can make us feel like dancing (for example the *Sabre Dance*). Sometimes, composers write music that tells us how sad they are. The class are now going to listen to a piece of music that tells how lonely a composer is feeling, because he is living far from his own country.

What to listen for

Largo begins with a series of chords on brass instruments, and then the cor anglais plays the plaintive melody which has made this symphony so popular. It is said that the melody expresses the composer's longing for his own country. Then we hear snatches of this melody, as well as other melodies, played by wind and strings. At the end, the main theme returns on the cor anglais.

Listening and Responding to the music

- **Largo** is suitable for all classes in the primary school. What will vary according to the class level is the response required of the children, and the amount of background information given to them. Depending on the age of the children, the teacher can tell all, some, or none of the details in the background section, as an introduction to the music.
- With younger classes, it is a good idea to play the first part only, which is a complete playing of the theme on the cor anglais. (approximately 1 minute 15 seconds.
- This is a good piece of music to introduce the cor anglais. Use an instrument chart, or photocopy pictures
- The theme, or main melody, of this piece has been given words by a musician named Fischer. It is called *Going Home*, and is usually sung in the style of a Negro Spiritual. Middle and Senior classes may like to learn to sing it, so the words are included here.

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***Going home, going home
I'm just going home.
Quite like some still day
I'm just going home.
It's not far, just close by
Though an open door
Work all done, so goodbye
Going to fear no more.
Mother's there expecting me
Father's waiting too
Lots of folk gathered there
All the friends I knew.
All the friends I knew.***

***Going home, going home
I'm just going home.
Shadows gone, break of day
Real life's just begun.
There's no break, there's no end
Just a leading on
Wide awake, near a smile
Going on and on.
Going home, going home
I'm just going home
It's not far, just close by.
Through an open door.
Through an open door.***

Integration Activities

Choose one or more of these activities depending on the age and interests of your class.

- SESE / Geography – Find New York and Prague on the map. How do you think Dvorák travelled from Prague to New York? Plan a suitable route. What route would you take today to travel between these two cities?

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- Language – Find words to describe loneliness. Use these words to compose a little song to go with the melody of the music.
- Research skills – use the Internet to find out more about Antonin Dvorák.
- Above all, enjoy the music.