

<http://www.theartsdesk.com/classical-music/classical-cds-weekly-dvo%C5%99%C3%A1k-haydn-jan%C3%A1%C4%8Dek-thomas-larcher>

# Classical CDs Weekly: Dvořák, Haydn, Janáček, Thomas Larcher

**Sizzling Czech orchestral music, witty classical symphonies from a much-missed conductor and contemporary piano music from Austria**

by [Graham Rickson](#) Friday, 25 July 2014

**Dvořák: Symphony no 8, Janáček: Symphonic Suite from *Jenůfa*** *Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra/Manfred Honeck* (Reference Recordings)

[Dvořák's](#) Seventh has the Brahmsian drama, and the Ninth has the crowd-pleasing tunes. But the major key Eighth is the most radical, and Manfred Honeck's remarkable performance highlights its originality in some style. Honeck's interventionist approach won't be to all tastes, but he justifies every interpretive decision in his sleeve notes, and the musical results are pretty special. He sees the composer here as "liberated from Germanic models... completely at home in his native Czech roots", stressing how close this work is to a programmatic symphonic poem. The solo flute's bird call is unusually flexible, improvisatory. What follows is electrifying – an exuberant adrenalin rush, and a wonderful easing into the rich lower string theme. There's real drama and darkness in the development, and the trumpet reprise of the symphony's opening chorale is magnificent. Listen out for the trilling horns near the close. The Adagio carries a seismic emotional punch – is this the greatest of Dvořák's slow movements? Lightness returns in the Allegretto. Sly string portamenti are audaciously done, and Honeck's treatment of the throwaway coda should elicit gurgles of delight. Trumpets are immaculate at the start of the finale, and Honeck's deliberate pacing of the variation theme allows him to let rip when the music accelerates, aided again by spectacular horns. The folky central section is superbly characterised. Reach the close, and you'll hopefully be awestruck. Cheap thrills and vulgarity are avoided. This is one of the great orchestral recordings – trust me. Playing and production values are beyond criticism.

And there's an intriguing coupling too – an orchestral suite from [Janáček's](#) opera *Jenůfa*, compiled by Honeck with the help of composer Tomáš Ille. Janáček's idiomatic use of folk music emphasises his debt to Dvořák, though the younger composer's startling orchestral technique remains unique. If you're not weeping at the suite's apotheosis, you've got no soul. Buy or download multiple copies for yourself and your loved ones – they will thank you for it.

