

SYMPHOMANIA!
DO IT YOURSELF

STABAT MATER ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK



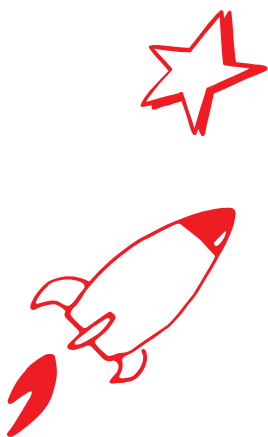
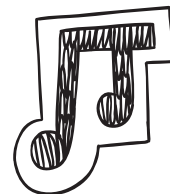
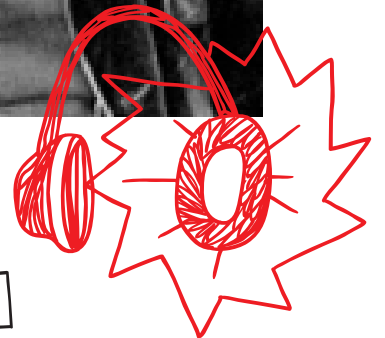
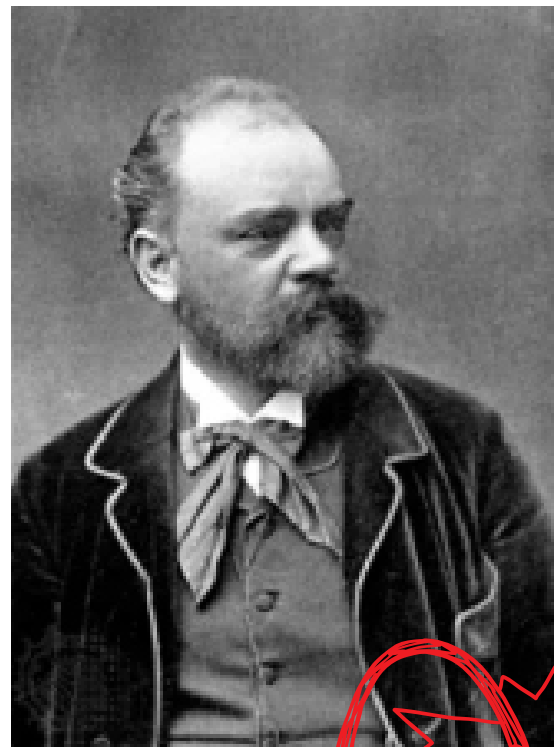
Today, we are listening to the Stabat Mater by Antonín Dvořák!

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Antonín Dvořák was born in Czechia in 1841 in a family of innkeepers and butchers. Although Dvořák was meant to become an innkeeper himself, he was not very interested in continuing the family tradition. He preferred to play the organ and viola, and he enrolled at the age of 16 in the organ school in Prague.

At the start of his career, Dvořák did not earn much from composing music. He regularly had to find a part-time job. Sometimes these jobs brought Antonín luck! He met his future wife, Anna Čermáková while giving private piano lessons.

Dvořák's fame grew throughout his life, and his music led him to travel the world. Today, he is still well known as one of the greatest composers of Czechia.





STABAT MATER

The Stabat Mater is an ancient poem. It tells the story of the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus, who died far too young. The text describes Mary mourning her dead son. The title of the poem is in fact the opening words of the text: Stabat mater dolorosa The grieving mother stood...



Over the centuries, many composers have written beautiful music to the Latin text of this sorrowful poem. Dvořák began working on his version of the Stabat Mater at a very difficult time for his family. As a young father, he had lost three children. He sought consolation in his music and began to work on a new composition. Can you hear sorrow in the following fragment?



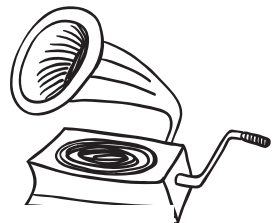
[Listen here to a fragment of Dvořák's Stabat Mater.](#)



ACTIVITY: Create your own memory corner

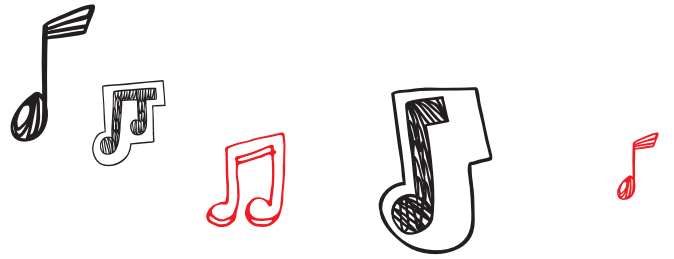
Are you also missing something or someone? Hold what you are missing in your heart and build a memory corner in 4 steps:

- 1 Look for a cosy corner in your (living) room and ask your mom or dad if you can set it up as a forget-me-not spot.
- 2 Make the corner comfy with LED candles, lights, photos, drawings or other objects that remind you of that person, animal or event that you are missing.
- 3 Write a letter or greeting card for what you are missing. You can keep your writings in a nice box in the memory corner or read them aloud with your family. Maybe you miss your mom, dad, brother or sister or someone else? Exchange your memories.
- 4 Does the music fit your memory corner? What music do you listen to when you miss someone? Play the music, listen and remember!



DO I HEAR... CHORAL MUSIC?

You've heard it right! For the performance of the Stabat Mater, we need not just the orchestra but also a choir, and even four extra soloists, each singing their own role!



[Click here to listen to a foretaste of one of these fragments with choir and orchestra.](#)

ACTIVITY:

Higher or lower?

In a choir there are various voices, from high to low and everything in between. The four main voices are soprano, alto, tenor and bass.

In the Stabat Mater by Dvořák, you can hear four soloists, each of whom sings one of those voices. Can you link the fragments to the right voice?



soprano
(high female voice)

alto
(low female voice)

tenor
(high male voice)

bass
(low male voice)



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

In Europe, women were long forbidden from performing as an artist?

So to be able to sing music with high voices, young boys with a fine singing voice were operated on just before their voice changed. After the operation, they kept their pure child's voice for the rest of their lives. These singers were known as castrati. Alessandro Moreschi was the last castrato, who lived around 100 years ago in Rome!

Today, performers in Europe can perform regardless of their gender, skin colour or background. How nice to hear all these different voices!



Photo of Alessandro Moreschi, an Italian castrato.

ACTIVITY:

Riding the voice lift!

How high and how low can you sing? Take your voice along in the lift!

1. Sing a low note on OO, AA, OH, AY or EE.
2. Now put your voice in the lift and let it slide higher and higher until you reach the top floor. PING! Now step out.
3. Back down? Get back into the lift and ride down again. Can you make your voice slide quickly or slowly? In chunks, or very smoothly?

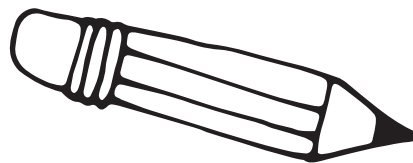
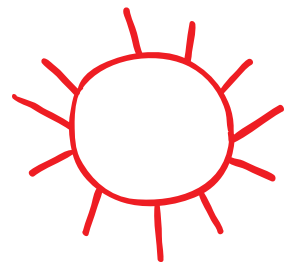
Composers refer to this slide in a singer's voice or an instrument as 'glissando'. That is an Italian word that literally means to slide.



AFTER THE RAIN, THE SUN COMES OUT



Dvořák's Stabat Mater is not all sorrow and grief. The composer ends the final movement with hopeful, consoling music. Listen here to what that sounds like.



ACTIVITY:

What makes you happy? Write it down or draw it and hang it up in your room, so you always have it close by.

ENJOY THE ABSOLUTELY BEAUTIFUL MUSIC OF ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK!