

In the Tatra Mountains

Vítězslav Novák: In the Tatra Mountains for orchestra

Symphonic poem for orchestra | 25'

3 3 3 3 - 4 3 3 1 - perc - hp - str

World première: 25.11.1902, Prague; Czech Philharmonic Orchestra Prague,
c. Oskar Nedbal

In 1902, Vítězslav Novák composed his most important orchestral work till then and his most successful work to date, the symphonic poem *In the Tatras* op. 26. Novák himself sketched the basic mood of *In the Tatra Mountains*, as follows:

“A gloomy atmosphere before a menacing storm. Grey-white mist swirls over the steep, craggy mountain slopes. The sun however manages to break through the clouds and for a brief moment illuminates the sublime, melancholy landscape. But soon new, more menacing clouds appear; they become more dense, broken by blinding flashes of lightning. The storm erupts. It crashes into the unyielding granite walls of the Tatras – After a wild struggle, silence reigns again. The setting sun gilds the gigantic mountain peaks and the evening church-bells are heard in the distance. Above the Tatra range, night descends in a pearl-strewn veil.”

Vladimír Lébl commented on the biographical background as follows. “We know that Novák was extremely familiar with his beloved Tatra mountains. He visited the area every year, not as a city-dweller but as an experienced sportsman and a keen and competent mountaineer. On one dangerous ascent he was lucky to escape with his life. [] Novák’s Tatra is not a musical depiction of the battles of Nature. [] (It) is a symbol of the mutinous Jánošík-like strength of the Slovak people and of victorious and rebellious power. The musical texture of the work, which corresponds precisely to that of the *Sonata*

eroica and powerful pathos of the turbulent middle section, entitles us to make such an interpretation. Its intellectual strength and tonal and structural coherence rank it as the most beautiful expression of Czech symphonic writing and raise it well above the level of ordinary musical landscape painting.” (Vladimír Lébl: *Vítězslav Novák*, Prag 1968).