ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

HERO'S SONG

Symphonic Poem Op. 111

Critical Edition based on the Composer's Manuscript Edited by Otakar Šourek

FULL SCORE

ORCHESTRA:

Flauto I, II — Oboe I, II — Clarinetto I, II — Fagotto I, II — Corno I, II, III, IV — Tromba I, II — Trombone I, II, III — Tuba — Timpani — Triangolo — Piatti — Gran Cassa — Archi

A HERO'S SONG

Critical edition based on original sources and prepared for the press by the Editing Board for the Works of Antonin Dvořák: Otakar Šourek, František Bartoš, Chairman - Jan Hanuš, Chief Editor - Dr. Jiří Berkovec - Jarmil Burghauser - Dr. Antonin Čubr - Antonin Pokorný — Karel Šolc.

THE SUMMER of 1897 found Antonin Dvořák (8. IX. 1841–1. V. 1904) at Vysoká considering what to take in hand after his completion the previous year of the symphonic poem, The Wild Dove. Since then he had given thought to a number of subjects in his search

for a suitable opera libretto, sketched fragments of an oratorio based on the Biblical Song of Songs, rejected Simrock's request for the orchestration of piano compositions by the lately deceased Brahms and set to work on the revision of the third act of his opera, The Jacobin. Scarcely was the revision completed when Dvořák was again in the throes of composition. After the cycle of symphonic poems inspired by Erben's ballads, the form continued to attract the composer by the problem it posed of the relation of an extra-musical content or "programme" to the musical form. And so, on August 4th, Dvořák began to sketch a new symphonic poem, of which he completed the sketch on August 23rd and the score on October 25th, 1897. This time, however, he did not choose so definite a literary pattern as were Erben's poems. He took as a starting-point his own conception of the essence of the programme which he wished to embody in sound. We have not the composer's direct testimony of what that conception was. It was noted by the musical critic, Dr. Robert Hirschfeld, in accordance with the composer's information and wishes, in the programme of the concert at which the work was first performed. Dvořák evidently asked his friend Julius Zeyer for a verbal formulation of the content of the composition. Zeyer, however, with apologies, complied with the request only after the première, and his commentary is in the poet's characteristically diffuse and somewhat obscure style. Zeyer's pathos was probably not very much to Dvořák's taste, for he did not make use of his version on any occasion, not even when the score was published.

On the basis of Hirschfeld's and Zeyer's interpretation of the composer's intention the late Otakar Šourek has formulated the programme of Dvořák's symphonic poem as follows: At the beginning of the composition, there are the indications of a keen courage and readiness to go out and conquer. But the élan is of short duration and is, as it were, struck down in its first flight. Disappointment and trial sing a sorrowful and despondent song. But even so, a voice of comfort and hope breaks through and grows in strength and volume till it bursts forth in the tones of a great festive hymn. Nature, too, adds her word of consolation and encouragement. Courage returns and with it the will to work and fight: at first in the strong, untamed tones of the introduction, and then, as if aware of its own strength, the soul sets out with a buoyant, warm, folkcoloured tune, going from one success to another, and breaking out at last into the strains of a glorious song of victory, its exultation and triumphant splendour rising to powerful heights.

Sourek holds the view that the programme which Dvořák had in mind is autobiographical in character. It is quite possible, only the verbal description of the content does not entitle us to make such an inference—it is too vague and indefinite. It fits in equally well with Dvořák's life and with that of many another. And there is no other testimony. We know from Hirschfeld's article that the composer had in mind the type of "a spiritual hero"—and more precisely, the type of a Slavonic rhapsodist or bard, whence the title of the work, "A Hero's Song".

No more is it possible from this quite general title to make any direct deduction as to Dvořák's intention. We know that Dvořák often sought a suitable title for his work when

he already had the conception worked out in his mind or even when it was actually completed. The designation of this symphonic poem also went through a number of variations: the original title in the autograph is scratched out; Otakar Šourek presumes that it was most likely, Life of a Hero. A note below it, in pencil, gives the variant, Eulogy of a Hero. The claim of authorship for the definitive title, Piseň bohatýrská (A Hero's Song) is put forward by Vítězslav Novák. In his book of memoirs (still in manuscript), "About Myself and Others", he affirms that he recommended this title to Dvořák on an analogy with Ludvík Lošťák's "Píseň vítězná" (Song of Victory). Novák's information is not otherwise confirmed or authenticated, but it is not improbable if we take into consideration the wellknown difficulty Dvořák had in thinking out titles for his works.

The question of the choice of a title is not, in any case, of particular importance in the maturing process of Dvořák's last symphonic work. The main attention has always been directed towards the form, the structure of the composition. Although as a whole, in the contrast and character of its parts, it fits into the framework of the traditional four symphonic movements (characteristic for Dvořák where he had not a definite literary pattern), it is in the main rhapsodical in style. This is also fully borne out by the modern interpretations of "A Hero's Song". The rhapsodic character makes itself strongly felt in spite of the ingenious compositional work based on successive variations and transformations of three thematic groups: the motif of courage, struggle and victory—the motif of disillusionment and scepticism—the motif of consolation and hope. These traits of character represented by the themes correspond to the main development of the musical content and action. The music in which it is expressed has much of Dvořák's singing quality, with strongly folk-music intonations in places. Most powerful in its effect on the listener is perhaps the triumphal close of the work.

The first storm of applause followed its performance in Vienna, on December 4th, 1898. "A Hero's Song" was given its première by the Vienna Philharmonic, conducted by Gustav Mahler. Soon after, on January 28th, 1899, Oskar Nedbal and the Czech Philharmonic performed the work at the Prague Rudolfinum. The same year Simrock published the score and "A Hero's Song" made its way into the world, where it appeared on the programmes of symphonic concerts much more frequently than it does today.

Translated by R. F. Samsour

Jiří Berkovec

(based on data supplied by the late Otakar Šourek)

PÍSEŇ BOHATÝRSKÁ

HEROISCHES LIED • A HERO'S SONG LE CHANT HÉROIQUE























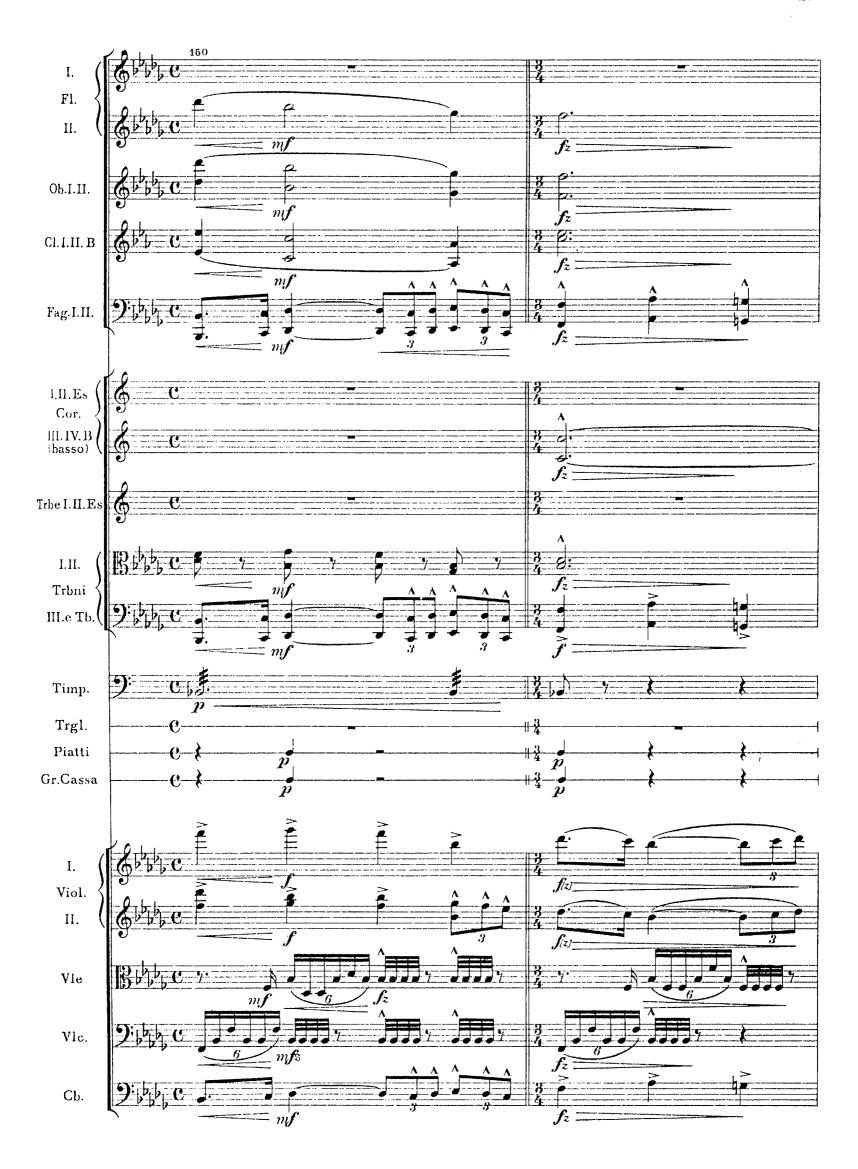








































































































































































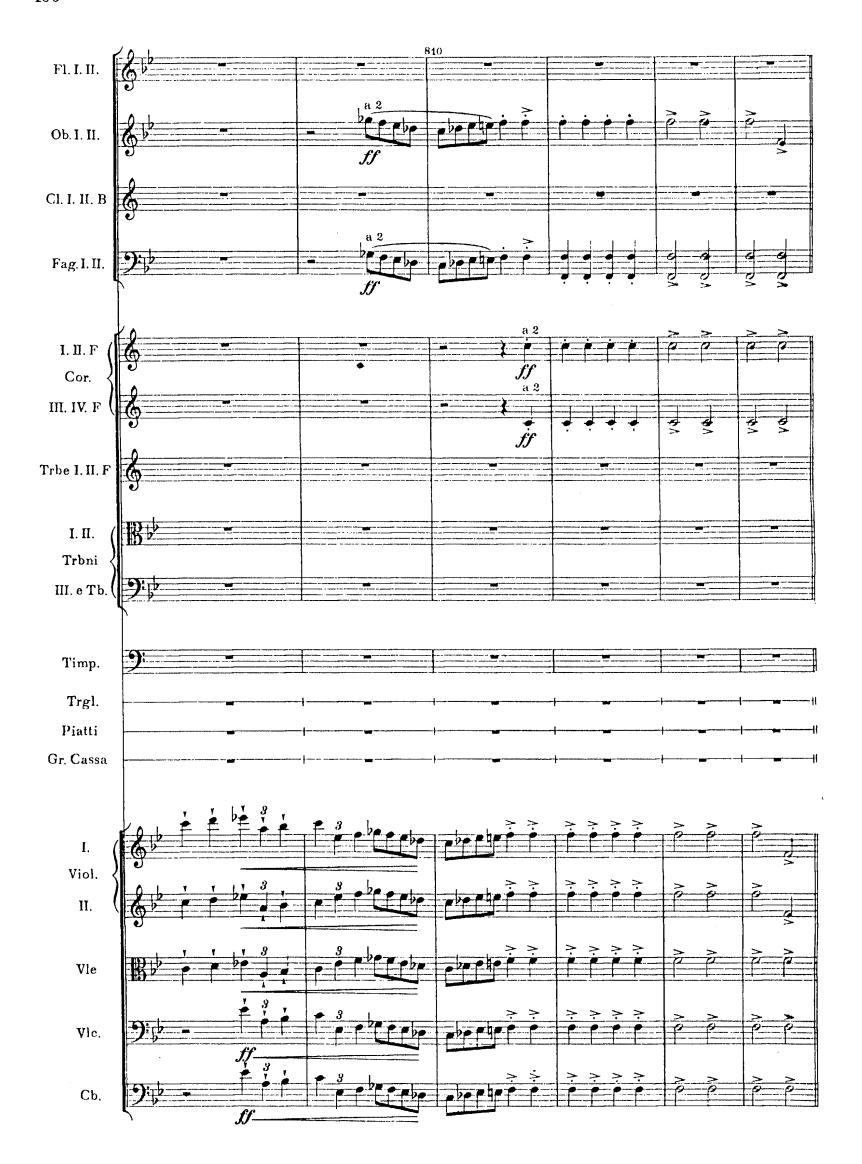






















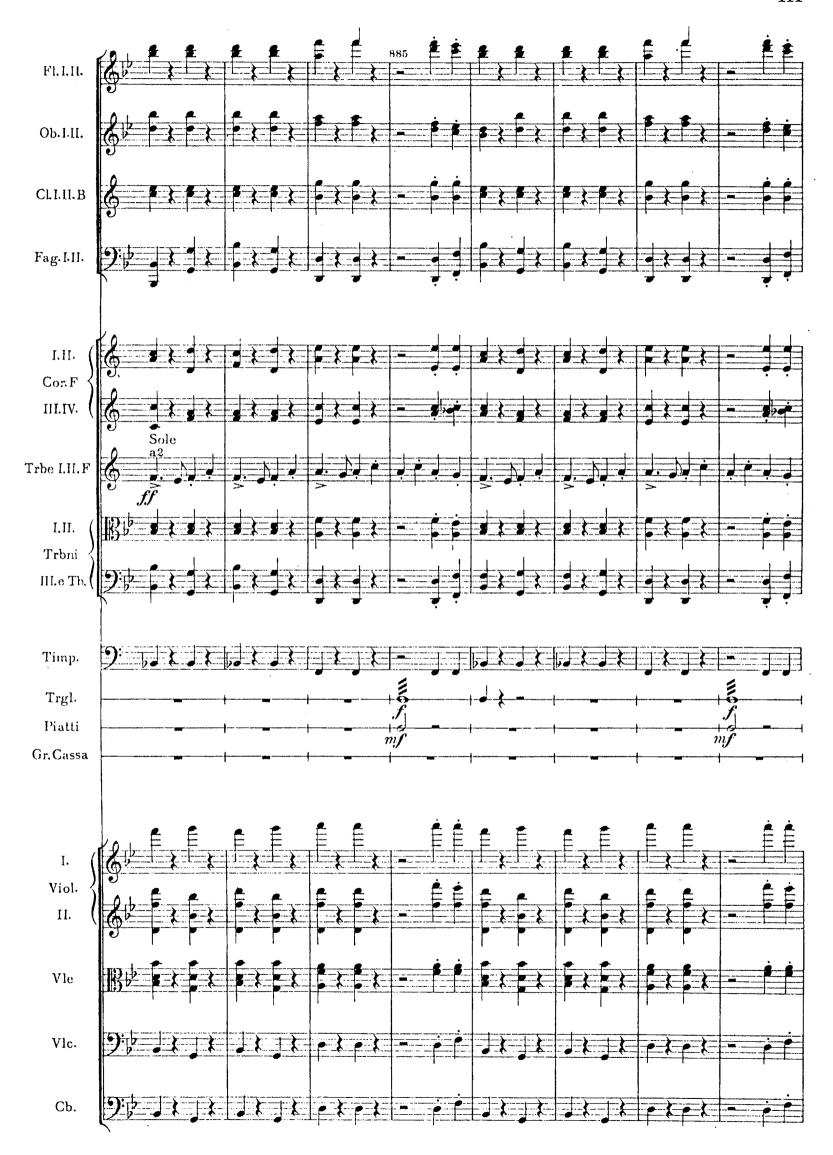


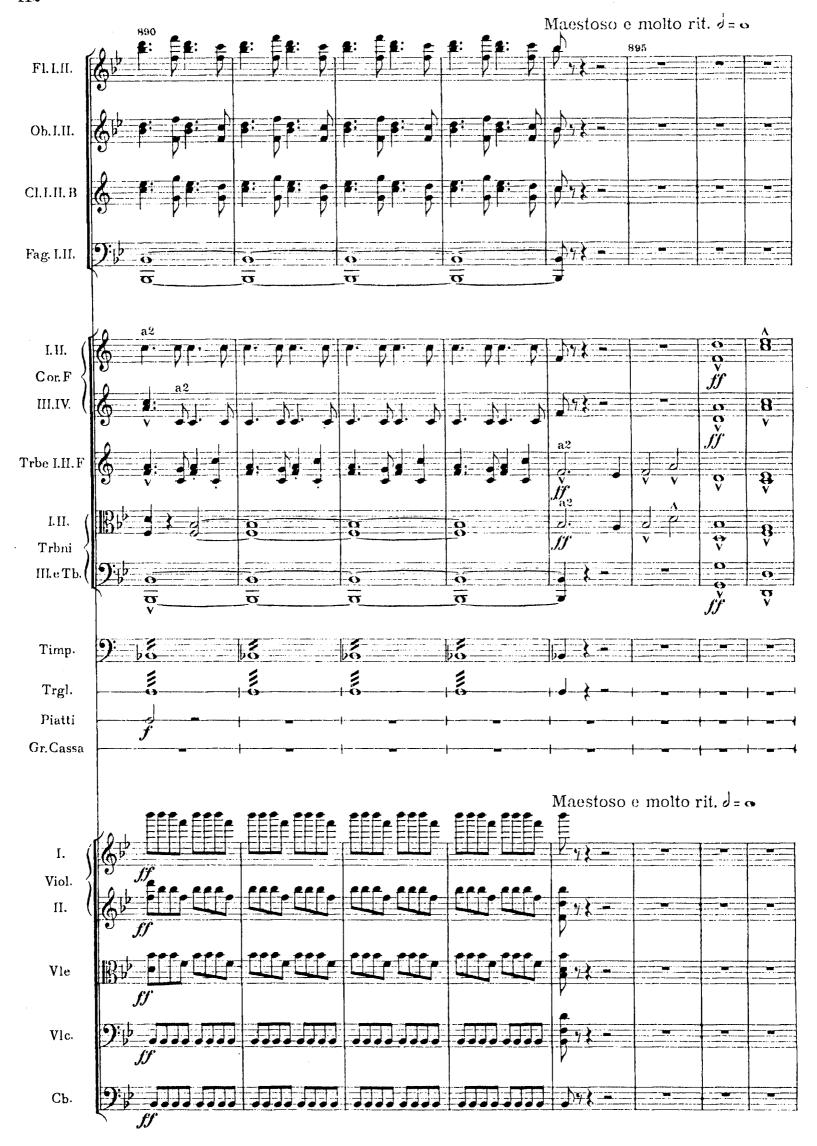
















EDITORS' NOTES

SOURCES:

a) The autograph in the possession of Antonin Dvořák's heirs, comprising 113 numbered pages. On the front page (unnumbered) is the title: A Hero's Song | symphonic poem | for large orchestra | composed by | Antonin Dvořák | Opus 111 | Score. The music paper bears the name and address of the firm: Torino Tip. Bellardi & Borla, via Garibaldi 32. It is 20-stave paper, 308 by 233 mm. The binding is black half-leather. The cover has a label, on which is written: No 55, op. 111, A Hero's Song. In the right-hand upper corner of the first numbered page is the date: Vysoká, 24th August

1897. Another date indicating the progress of the work is the composer's note at bars 427-429, inserted in the middle of the stave for the trombones: At Lužany, 20th September 1897. At the end of the composition is Dvořák's usual formula: Thanks be to God! completed on the 25th October 1897 | Antonín Dvořák | This composition should last 21 to 22 minutes. |

The following points should be noted in connection with a more detailed description of the manuscript:

At bar 207, the timpani part is written into the stave for trombone and bass tuba, with the indication: Tymp.

At bars 415-420, the oboe part has the instruction: coll Fl. II. In Simrock's edition, however, by an oversight, only the part of Oboe I. is printed.

In bars 421-434, the composer did not write out, except for the strings, the appropriate notes, but only the instruction: 1-4 come sopra; i. e., the notation of these bars is identical with that of bars 427-430.

In addition, the manuscript contains many notes in pencil in the composer's hand, of which we may mention the following:

At bar 318, to the left of the name of the instrument at the bassoon part: to be printed in the bassoon part.

At bar 347, beneath the double-bass part at the right: F double sharp to be printed in the oboes.

At bar 441, again beneath the double-bass part:

N. B. the second and the last note should be only pocoslightly stressed.

At bar 479, below the double-bass stave: # Bassi c sharp = Corno + Fagotto.

At bar 894, beneath the part for double-basses, the tempo indication in pencil: Andante, later completely rubbed out.

The autograph was not used as a master-copy for the engravers, but most probably a copy corrected and revised by the composer. For this reason, we have not listed the numerous marks in the form of question-marks, upright and sloping crosses etc. inserted most likely by the composer himself in different places in the manuscript and indicating the possible need for a reconsideration by himself of the notation of the passages in question. We pre-

sume that in the copy for the press these doubts were definitively resolved. In as far as these places differ from the readings in the Simrock edition, we have, of course, listed them in the *Annotazioni*.

b) The edition published by N. Simrock, Berlin, under ed. no. 11,195. Copyright 1899.

Our edition is based on Simrock's edition, published during the composer's lifetime and undoubtedly under his direct supervision, although it contains, as compared with previous works of Dvořák published by this firm, numerous misprints. It has been carefully compared with the autograph. More important deviations between the sources are listed in the *Annotazioni*. In our edition, obvious misprints have been emended and omissions put in according to the autograph. Minor indications for the executants have been inserted on the basis of analogous places in the autograph and in the printed edition. More important emendations by the present editors are placed in square brackets [].

ABBREVIATIONS:

A = autograph

S = Simrock's edition

SN = The present edition of SNKLHU

[1] = slip in the autograph or misprint

Vers. I = the original reading, altered by the composer in the autograph

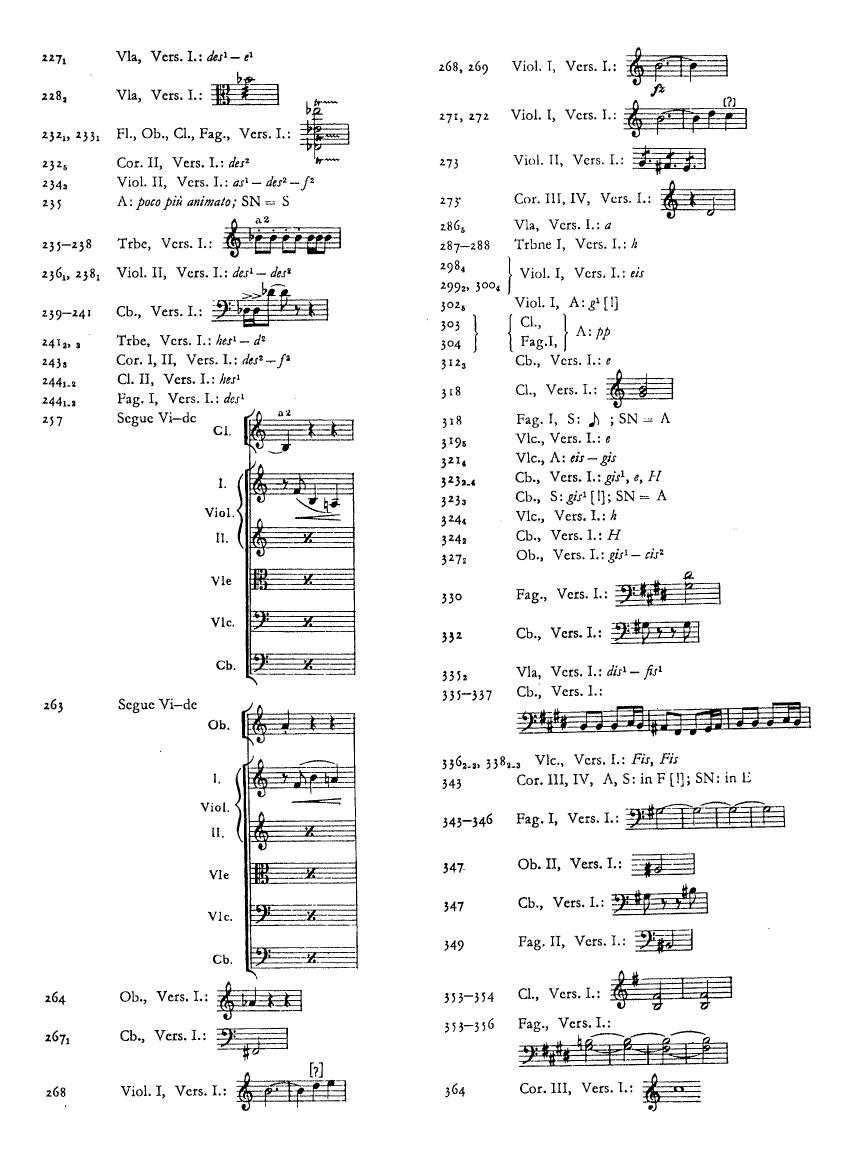
The large Arabic numerals indicate the bar; the small numerals beside them indicate the note (or chord) in the bar. Rests are not counted.

VYDAVATELSKÉ POZNÁMKY

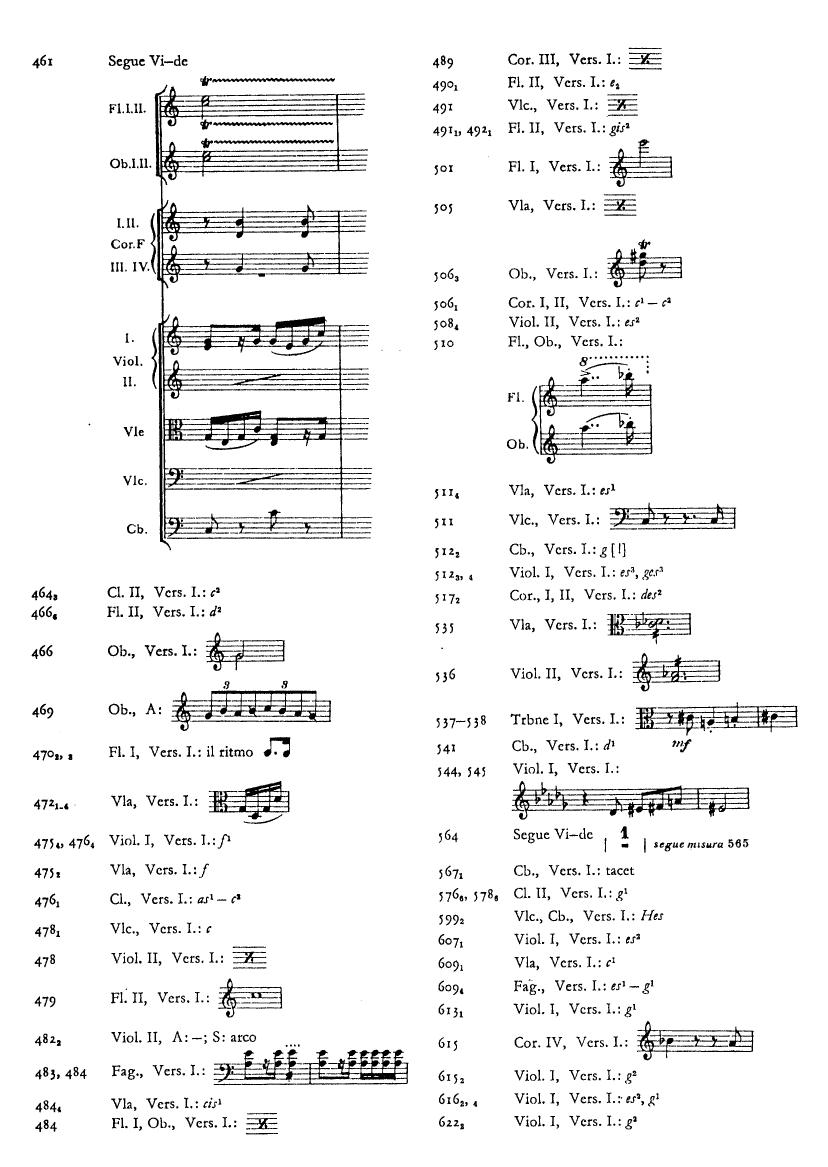
ANNOTAZIONI



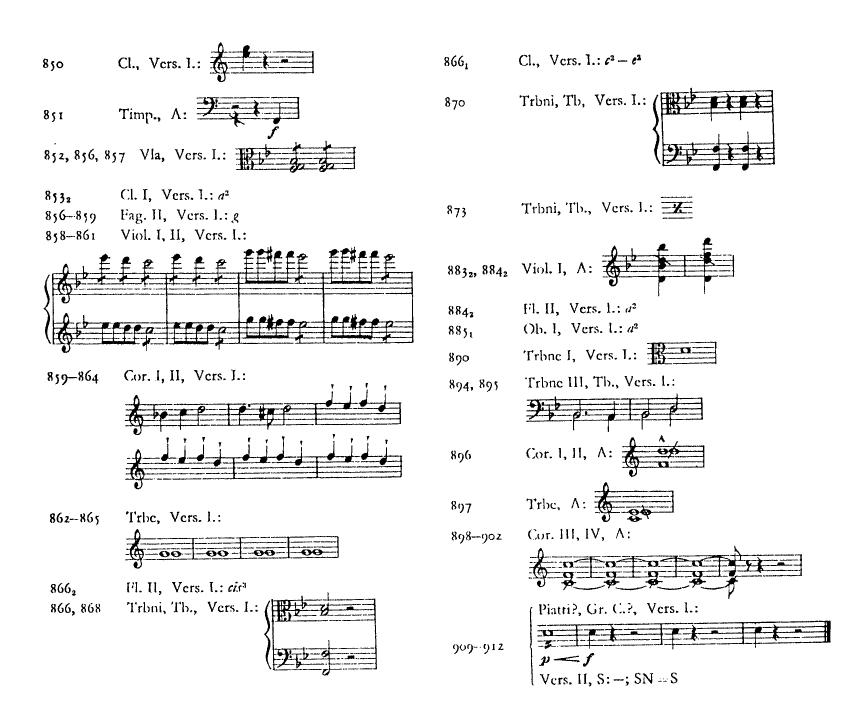








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             Fag., Vers. I.: a
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             Fl. I, Vers. I.: des2
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717-720
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729
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             Fl. I, Vers. I.: fis2
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             Cor. III, IV, Vers. I.: a 2
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             Ob., Vers. I.: 7
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            Cor. III, IV, A: a^1 - c^2 - e^2 [?]
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Antonin Pokorný, Karel Solc