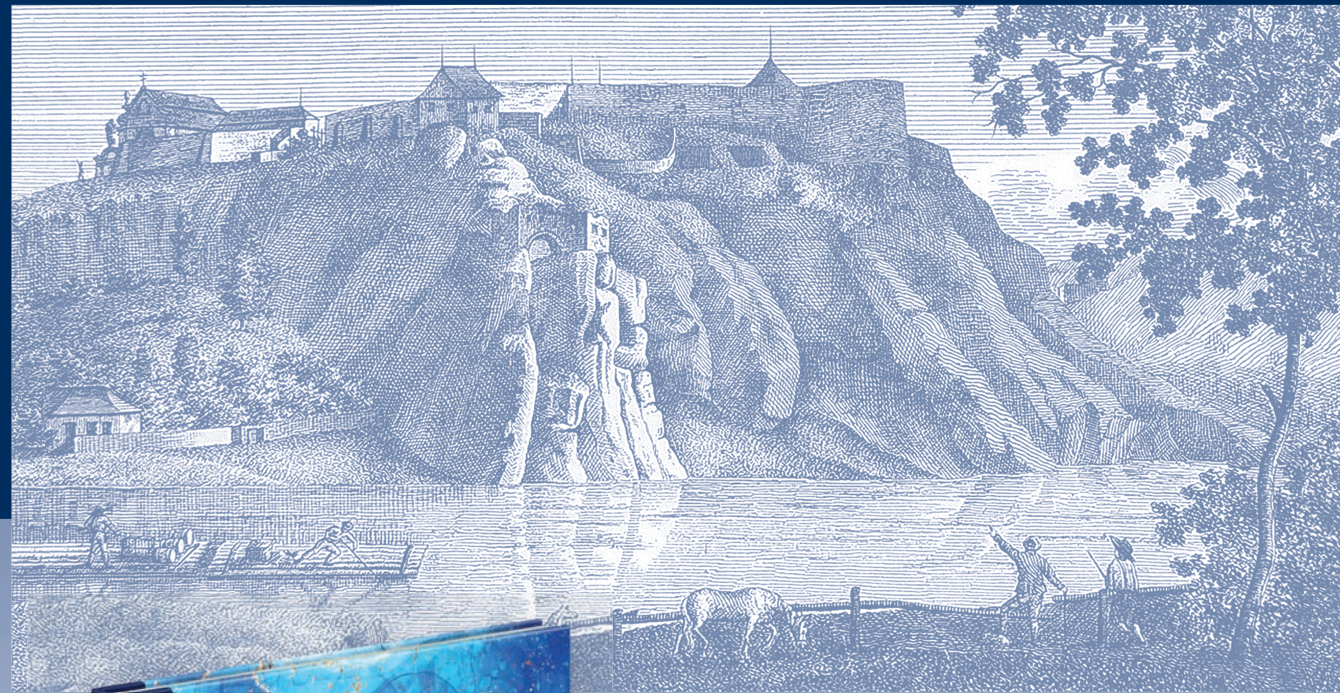


Vltava

Icon of Czech music



Bedřich Smetana
Vltava · The Moldau
Symphonic poem from the cycle
Má vlast / My Country

BÄRENREITER FACSIMILE
Documenta musicologica II,59
Facsimile of the autograph score in the
National Museum – Bedřich Smetana Museum Prague

With a Commentary (Cz/Eng/Ger)
by Hugh Macdonald and Olga Mojžíšová
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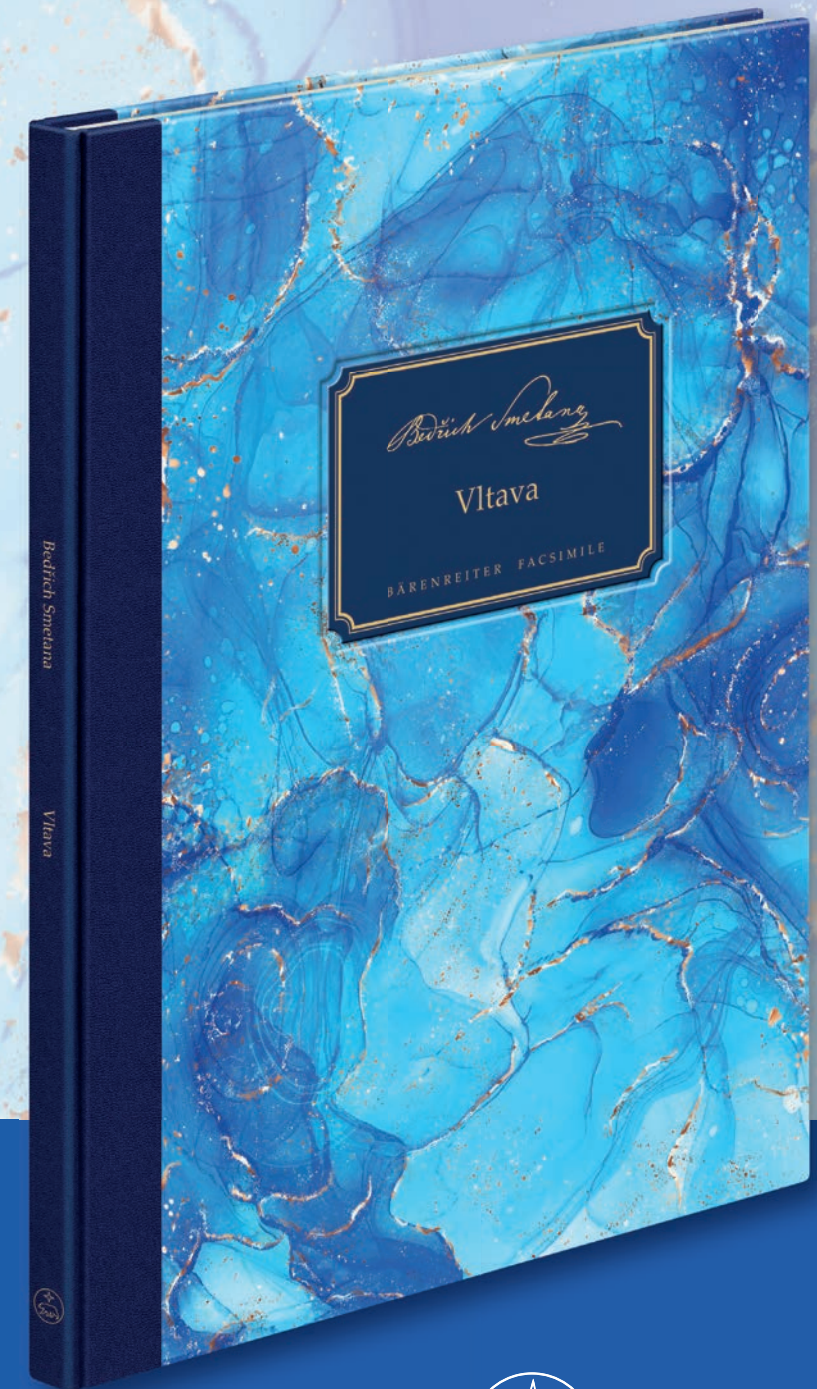
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The autograph of *Vltava* – a fascinating testimony to Bedřich Smetana's extraordinary musical imagination

Vltava (The Moldau), the second part of the cycle of symphonic poems *Má vlast* (My Country), is considered an icon of Czech music worldwide. At 50 years of age Smetana, who was in a state of complete deafness, composed it in just 19 days and completed it on 8 December 1874; he was never able to hear this or any other part of the *My Country* cycle.

Apart from five short motivic sketches on a single sheet, no other sketches have survived. It is highly probable that Smetana wrote *Vltava* directly into the score. He was most concerned that his notation should be error-free and unambiguous.

Thus in the autograph, which was meticulously written in violet ink, there are no traces of a creative struggle for the final form of the work; there are no deletions or conspicuous corrections. If the composer subsequently saw the need for a change, he erased the original version so thoroughly that misinterpretations of the notation could be ruled out.

The unusually large number of dynamic and performance markings as well as verbal comments also testify to Smetana's endeavour to write down his musical ideas in every detail in an unmistakable manner – a remarkable autograph, not least in this respect.

First publication of the
complete autograph score

The composition depicts the course of the Vltava, beginning from the two small springs, the cold and warm Vltava, to the unification of the two streamlets into one stream, and then the Vltava flowing through the woods and meadows, through the countryside, which happens to be awake with wedding merriment; fairies dancing in the light of the moon; proud castles and ruins stand aloft on nearby cliffs; the Vltava tumbling down into the St. John Rapids; and flowing on to Prague in its broad expanse, past Vyšehrad, and finally it fades into the distance with its majestic current joining the Elbe.

Smetana's own words on *Vltava*